

RACIALIZED FIELDS: ASIANS, MEXICANS, AND
THE FARM LABOR STRUGGLE IN CALIFORNIA

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the historical struggle of Asian and Mexican origin farm workers in California during the twentieth century. The study investigates how the battle for economic justice, in which farm workers engaged, did not center solely on issues of class. Instead, I utilize the sociological lens of race theories to examine how farm workers confronted historically rooted forms of racism that acted differently against Asian and Mexican workers. Moreover, the dissertation asserts that the complex trajectory of the farm workers movement was shifted and shaped by internal and external forces emanating from landowners, the state, and within the very constituency of the movement. Therefore, I utilize sociological analysis of the historical narrative to analyze how a social movement transitions from failure to dormancy and then success. Last, I provide insight into how and why the movement faded into decline.

While historical in its approach, I propose that my theoretical conclusions on racism, inter-minority cooperation and conflict, and social movement dynamics may be extrapolated to sociologically comprehend other historical periods, events, racial groups, and organizations. Furthermore, the study's focus upon Asian and Mexican origin working people is significant. Both groups have received little attention in regards to interaction with each other. Moreover, they are seldom defined as working class groups in US society, currently and historically.

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CHAPTER 1: THE SOCIOLOGY OF RACE & CLASS AND THE CASE OF THE FARM WORKERS MOVEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Race and class are central to studies of inequality in sociology. In scholarly research on race and class stratification, sociologists endeavor to understand how deprived groups strive to rectify a persistent state of inequality. Much of this work has focused on the struggle of African Americans and the Black civil rights movement. Though helpful, there remains a need to sociologically analyze the historical narrative of racial and class struggle as it pertains to other groups of color. Specifically, comparative work on Asian Americans and Latinos and their particular experiences with racism and racialization have only recently emerged as key areas of study within scholarship. In following this thread in the emergent scholarship, this dissertation offers an approach to race and ethnicity that illuminates our thinking on race *and* class in such a way that does not necessarily privilege a Black/White paradigm. In doing so, the study is informative on how race and class inequality are deeply ensconced in US society. Further, the dissertation speaks specifically to how racial dynamics impact the workings of a poor people of color movement.

I place stage center the plight of farm workers and the ebb and flow of farm worker mobilization efforts from the 1930s to the 1980s in California. I argue that this case study enables a sturdy comparative analysis of race and ethnicity (CRE) as both Asian and Mexican workers are considered in what follows. The creation of the field of CRE offers valuable theoretical tools to interpret and analyze the historical experiences of racial minority groups, particularly workers, as they interact with to each other. By carrying out such a study, some may interpret the findings here to be part of “moving

beyond” the Black/White paradigm. But I maintain that this approach will invigorate scholarship on all racial groups in various historical and social contexts.

In terms of comprehending the particular social movement dynamics of farm worker mobilization, the dissertation conceptualizes the farm workers movement of California as a “broad, historical trend.”¹¹ Positioning the long span of farm worker activism as an event that occurred over the course of the twentieth century reorganizes our understanding of mobilization as a long term, historically rooted occurrence. This conceptualization of the movement also elucidates for us the depths of endurance and persistence required for workers of color to attain justice. As it were, farm workers struggled and contended with periods of unproductive activity, dormancy, peaks, and lows. For working people of color, the valleys are long periods of time and peak moments are fleeting and difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, the numerous phases of success and failure offer an invaluable opportunity to dissect key periods in farm worker history for sociological insight into racial and class inequality.

In analyzing the following narrative, I seek to answer a few important questions: What prevents the successful movement of workers of color into a racially united front in the 1930s? What allows an interracial coalition to take root in the 1960s? And how does the coalition fall into a state of dissolution in the 1970s and 1980s? In traversing the terrain of race and class, the study provides explanation of how notions of citizenship factor into farm worker struggle especially with the implementation of the Bracero Program. Therefore, while the dissertation engages with capitalists as key actors that

¹¹ Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (2005) uses this term in her own conceptualization of the Black civil rights movement.

operated against farm workers' interests, I take into account the role of the state as an entity that possessed abiding interests in the outcome of strike actions.

In undertaking a broad range of years in the study, I detach farm worker historiography and sociology from their exclusive relationship to the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). Indeed, the UFW is central to the farm workers movement, but this was not the case until 1965. The dissertation is indeed concerned with the UFW and thus spends most of its efforts, albeit with a different approach, with analysis of primary data culled from UFW archives. However, I argue that the astounding feat of engineering union contracts for farm workers, which the UFW accomplished in 1970, was resultant of solving some of the deeply rooted problems that had persisted for a long time. Thus, the analysis must peer back into the history, which led up to the momentous events of the 1960s and 1970s.

One of these seemingly intractable problems was the division between workers of color within California's agricultural labor force. Filipino and Mexican workers had become the core of farm labor in the 1930s, attempted to forge labor unions during that decade, failed and then faced a long period of inactivity thereafter. They labored for White landowners and Japanese tenant farmers. How did Filipinos and Mexicans foster social movement success in the 1960s? And what occurred to Japanese tenant farmers between the 1930s to the 1960s? To answer these questions, the dissertation lays out the racial politics of the farm workers movement and more precisely, California agriculture—something that is frequently and quickly touched upon in work on the UFW but rarely, if ever, theorized and evaluated in a robust manner.

Moreover, Japanese tenant farmers were central to California agriculture's organization of capital and labor. Rarely, if ever, do Japanese origin people gain a central spot in farm worker studies—particularly the majority of studies that focus often upon Mexican farm workers. Consequently, as I demonstrate in the first two substantive chapters, my study brings into sharp relief the singular racial lens of most farm workers studies; the focus is upon Mexicans or one racial group. In fact, it hardly seems that any analysis termed or catalogued as being a “farm worker study” ever alludes to Asian origin workers. Furthermore, few, if any, of the studies actually direct their theoretical efforts towards a theory of race or even class. Most of the scholarship focuses upon social movement dynamics. While the social movement-based literature on the farm workers movement offers an important set of lessons, I assert that racial dynamics in the twentieth century history of California agriculture remain understudied. This effort to shed light on these racial dynamics is a noteworthy contribution in light of the shift and turns which the sociology of race has taken in the twenty plus years since publication of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States*.

RACIAL FORMATIONS AND THE POWER OF RACISM

Omi and Winant's (1994 [1986]) concept of racial formation has been a bedrock of or noted extensively in most significant studies of race, racism, and race relations since its emergence on the scene. Emphasizing the “sociohistorical” dimensions of race and illustrating the evolutionary process by which race is defined, they argue that US history is suffused with a series of racial projects, both racist and anti-racist—the latter working toward equity and the former working against it. Further, they position the state as both a manufacturing site and playing field (albeit uneven) in which race is defined and

contested. In such a context, institutions and actors in the social world are subject to the process of racialization. The usages of flexible concepts such as “racial formation” and “racialization” have proven beneficial to comparative race and ethnicity. Their key contribution has been to provide a theoretical approach that places race at the center of the analysis. Rather than identifying racial inequality as epiphenomenal of class inequities or cultural inferiority, a racial formation/racialization approach allows for specifically focused study on racism. Subsequently, in the post-Omi and Winant era, we have witnessed significant pieces of scholarship that take care to place race at a central point of stratification analysis.

Current work by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1997, 2001, & 2006) has attempted to corral the supposedly unmanageable concept of race. Some (Loveman 1999) have retorted to Bonilla-Silva’s theoretical interpretation that there exists a historically contingent system of racialization by invoking, or rather retreating to, ethnicity as the key site of analysis. However, these critiques, though perhaps providing some insight, bog us down in either/or choices. Bonilla-Silva’s point is simple: race matters. But the implications of such a theoretical venture or not so easily stated and understood.

First, it should be noted and it is surprising that the notation must be forthcoming, there is no assertion from sociology of race scholars such as Omi and Winant, Tomás Almaguer, Bonilla-Silva, and later to be included, Moon-Kie Jung, that race is a biologically “real” trait. However, most certainly, the sociology of race would maintain that social actors, such as powerful *haoles* [White landowners and top-level managers in Hawaii agriculture] or White landowners in 1930s California, *most assuredly* bought into these racist, essentialist depictions of racial groups—particularly the workers of color

held in their employ. These essentializing forces of racism aided in the design of racially unequal social systems that acted to stratify and locate various racial groups in specific hierarchical positions.

Implicitly couched in the axiomatic sociological idea that there exists a socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckman 1966), scholars such as Bonilla-Silva note the real consequences of social systems. Built upon a very simple sociological precept, Bonilla-Silva holds forth that material inequalities and divisions fall upon and are situated along lines of racial division. Thus, race, though socially constructed, is no flimsy social edifice. On the contrary, the construction of race in US history has operated to simultaneously create a real and measurable material inequality among racial groups. Ideologies of white supremacy, scientific racism, and systems of legalized inequality maintain privilege and superior positions for Whites. Bonilla-Silva argues that groups of color are continually subjugated by what he labels a “racialized social system.” Taking a cue from this set of ideas, I demonstrate in the dissertation how a racialized and racist social system incurs heavy damage on the farm laborer fortunes of Japanese, Filipino and Mexican origin workers. These consequences, which the workers confront, are resultant of *both* race and class inequality.

To the end of explicating the overlap of race and class, Moon-Kie Jung’s recently published papers (1999, 2002, & 2003) and book (2006) on Hawaii’s labor history have demonstrated the inextricable link between these two variables. Jung explains how an interracial working class was created on the islands of Hawaii in the 1940s and why the cohesion of a multiracial workforce was not possible in the previous decade. Critiquing yet remaining within the predominant Marxist analytic on Asian and Portuguese workers

in Hawaii, Jung disassembles the history of a multiracial plantation workforce to demonstrate that their achievement of interracial labor unionism was a long process and constituted far more than simplistic realization that, at long last, the workers understood the requirement for interracial cooperation. An important component of the Jung model is that Portuguese, Filipino, and Japanese workers were conceived and self-identified as distinct racial groups with differentiated economic and political interests. In effect, a racial hierarchy existed and it had to be deconstructed in order for the workers to foster a new vision of their own and other racial groups in order to build a racially and class conscious labor movement.

Additionally, the work of Claire Jean Kim requires consideration in the analysis of interminority relations. In particular, Kim's (1999) conception of a "field of racial positions" is apropos for analysis of the predicament of Asian and Mexican origin farm workers. Kim submits that in this racialized field of interactions Blacks are insiders in US society but still deemed an inferior racial group. Conversely, Asian Americans are outsiders but are still reserved a spot as a superior group. Asian Americans and Blacks thus experience conflictive group relations since Whites remain superior insiders within the historical and contemporary social reality of the US. This mode of interaction between all three racial groups "triangulates" Asian Americans as a moderately ranked racial group—better than Blacks but never as good as Whites. Extension of "triangulated racial analysis" to Latinos and Asians provides insight as to how and why Filipinos and Mexicans remained divided for so long in California agricultural history. Further, a comprehension of reasons for the Filipino/Mexican split is necessary in order to explicate how the groups formed a racial coalition in the 1960s.

The dissertation follows the theoretical lines that Bonilla-Silva, Jung, and Kim thread out and utilizes the theoretical matter, which they offer, to sociologically comprehend key moments in California's agricultural labor history. However, my historical sociological approach jibes with other pieces of scholarship that have taken into account the historical transformations in race relations among workers who contend with the materially inequitable outcomes of racially unequal configurations (see Song 2004). For example, Almaguer (1994) maps out the racial hierarchy existent in late nineteenth century California in *Racial Fault Lines* (more will be said about this in the ensuing chapter). Historian Chris Friday's (1994) *Organizing Asian American Labor*, a central text in the small set of literature on Asian American labor history, is also illustrative of racial hierarchy analysis. Friday categorizes Chinese workers in the salmon-canning industry as forming a "labor aristocracy" in comparison to other workers of color that labored in the same industry.

Yet while a racial hierarchy approach is useful, I will point out that a hierarchical conception of racial inequality should not merely position groups as existing in isolation from each other and conclude its business. On the contrary, a racial hierarchical model is instructive in detailing how racial groups have differing interests that are, in part, defined by the unique ways that these groups are subjected to White supremacy. This is evidenced throughout the study as the mutually opposed class interests between Japanese tenant farmers and their Filipino and Mexican workforce become apparent. Herein is where Kim's "field of racial positions" thesis is instructive. Filipinos, Japanese, and Mexicans all labored on California farms, but the situation was one in which Filipinos and Mexicans—in competition with each other for work—were employed by Japanese

farmers who rented land from White landowners. The intense competition between Filipinos and Mexicans continued on for decades. Moving into the 1940s, Mexican American workers became concerned with the presence of Mexican guest workers contracted through the Bracero Program. Therefore, the field of racial positions, like processes of racial formation, is not static. Racial dynamics between these groups shift and change over time. Further, racism should be included as one dynamic within race relations that undergoes transformation.

As a consequence of differentiated race, class, and nation-based positions, Jung (2002) explains that in the Hawaii case groups of color encounter diversiform racisms. I assert that this conceptualization of racism as a mutable, oppressive force is an invaluable contribution to current sociological thinking on race relations not only in history but currently as well. This is especially necessary for studies on Asian Americans and Latinos in the US. The complex manner in which both groups have confronted race and racism—even when brought out in a historical context—provides insight to the contemporary predicament with which both groups must contend.

As to the historical struggle of Asian and Mexican origin farm workers, they certainly contested the intertwined condition of race and class inequality. However, few sociologists (Isaac and Christiansen 2002) investigate the overlap of labor and civil rights struggles. Scholarship from historians deftly points the way. Flug (1990) and Levy (1990) offer insight on the struggle for Black freedom and labor rights. Recently, Zaragosa Vargas's (2005) aptly titled study, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, speaks to the hinged experiences of racial and economic subjugation for Mexican origin workers. Taken together, these bits of analysis indicate race and class stratification do not

constitute one in the same disempowering forces. However, they do interact and are thus mutually inclusive independent variables, which, in part, dictate the forms of inequality, which workers of color confront today and I would contend they confronted in the historical labor struggles of California agriculture.

THERE AIN'T NO AMERICAN IN ASIAN AND LATINO

What is qualitatively different about anti-Asian and anti-Latino racism in historical and contemporary US society? Anthropologist Nicholas De Genova offers that in respect to racial and national identity, Asians and Latinos simply have never measured up to White, American identity. De Genova (2006: 5) argues that being “American” in the US constitutes “the expression of a white nationalism.” Even in a contemporary environment, we must root our comprehension of current imperialistic endeavors by the US government (i.e. the Iraq War) in a history of subjugating people of color by noting that they are not and cannot be White. De Genova (Ibid: 12) adds that Latinos and Asian Americans “within the space of the US nation-state or its imperial projects” have been “rendered virtually indistinguishable from a conclusively racial condition of nonwhiteness.”

So, what differentiates this oppressive state of condition for Asian and Latino people as opposed to Black Americans? Both groups seem to have undergone variant forms of racialization as compared to Whites and Blacks.² They are much more likely to be perceived as illegal immigrants or usurpers of the rightful position of Whites.

Therefore, Latinos and Asian Americans are stationed in some space—I am reticent to

² I understand that some Latinos such as Puerto Ricans are often regarded by themselves and others as Black. For more on the overlap of Black and Puerto Rican identity, see Flores (1993). When I refer to Latinos in this study—though a term broad in its grouping of people—I am referring to Mexican origin people.

say a “middle position”—that is not well explained with a simple notation of the opposing poles of Blackness and Whiteness. Their experiences, currently and historically, are frequently identified as never being able to be quite White, but also never being moored into the lowliest position of being Black.

An accessible and currently relevant example of this process is illustrated by the repeated attribution to Barack Obama, as he campaigned for the presidency in 2008, that he is a practitioner of Islam or that his election to the presidency would appeal to terrorism. In this instance, there is a conflation of fictional racial/regional origins (Arab), religious practice (Islam’s automatic link to being Brown or Black), and of simply *not* being White. This powerful set of bigotries constructs a Black man with a name that sounds “strange” or “foreign” as being an Arab and/or Muslim. Constructing an individual in such a way is the incipient stage in a historically rooted racist logic, which concludes that Arab Muslims are all things antithetical to the core Anglo-American identity of White (harmless and civilized), Christian (not a reprobate), and English-speaking (any other language or even English spoken with the accent of a non-native speaker signals hidden meanings and/or a lack of assimilation). Indeed, it is a tragic commentary on the racial politics of the U.S. that Obama’s retort to such allegations must consist of invocation of his interracial (read: White) heritage and Christian faith. Few politicians—such as the 2008 Republican nominee John McCain—would ever have to make such pronouncements as a preface to any message they wished to deliver to the country.

A singular case as the Obama example provides is helpful in comprehending a racialized social system. A larger case study on the plight of Asian and Mexican origin

workers in twentieth century California agriculture provides the historical comprehension of this racialized social system. In the dissertation, I show how Mexican origin workers are understood time and again as the strong, sturdy, and serviceable workers that will carry out long hours of agricultural work with workhorse reliability. Japanese and Filipino workers are seen as appropriate for farm labor as well, but more likely to embody a threat to the stability of the agricultural labor market as agitators. The Japanese are a particularly powerful example of a racial group that is perceived as nearly the equal of superior Whites.

The onset of World War Two and the internment process exhibit how the state and White growers suspected Japanese farmers of either procuring control of California agriculture or as potential enemies of the US state residing within the U.S. nation. Asian and Mexican origin people become racialized and thus subject to racism as a result of their own roots in a colonized territory (Filipinos as colonial subjects to the US empire and Mexican origin people in what was formally Mexico—the U.S. Southwest) and as threats to the racial and national supremacy of White America (Japanese Americans being constructed as representative of the Japanese Empire).

Testifying to a complex history of racial tension and inequality, the dissertation uncovers the complexities of race and racism within the farm workers movement. As noted in the opening remarks of the introduction, the field of CRE has enabled this type of scholarship to take root. Studies such as what follows in these ensuing chapters are seemingly brand new ways of thinking. In fact, comparative work is nested in a longer tradition that formed in response to the assimilation paradigm thinkers of the twentieth century. Indeed, within the twentieth century scholarship on race and ethnicity,

sociologists—particularly White sociologists—have possessed great optimism and a severe lack of criticism in regards to the opportunities groups of color have to assimilate into a core national identity. Race is excluded from many of these early designs—the focal point is culture. This is unfortunate as the privileging of cultural attributes in the explanation of racial inequality is a misdirected effort since full and complete integration, particularly in the economic, social and economic spheres, is yet to occur.

For example, today Latinos remain leashed to a negative group identity, which objectifies them as too foreign for assimilation.³ This situation testifies to the unwillingness of the majority White citizenry to allow for inclusion of Latinos into US society. In contradistinction to Latinos, a recent report (2008) offered by the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education indicates that Asian Americans in higher education are stereotyped as the “solution” minority in comparison to other racial minorities who fail to attain academic success. However, the report shows that many students of Asian origin are neglected and often seen as a group that does not and should not require the aid usually provided to struggling students. In fact, many Asian American students are actually in need of the full set of education services that other disadvantaged racial groups require.

Indeed, Latinos in the first case are racialized as unfit for US citizenship—they are not privy to opportunities available in the country—while Asians are racialized as seemingly superior to other racial minority groups—they should be able to hold up on their own. Thus, Asians in the US are treated to a backhanded, race-based (and racist)

³ Some commentators within the US media (Pat Buchanan and Lou Dobbs) and politicians (Rep. Tom Tancredo of Colorado) pose Mexicans, for example, as uncivilized heathens who cannot culturally conform to life in the US. Ironically, Mexico’s Catholic religion and Romance language cannot cut it in our “Western” society.

compliment, which intonates Asian superiority versus other racial minority groups. But I maintain that it is the bottom line that matters most. No matter which group of color is positioned as inferior or superior relative to other groups of color, the structural consequences are that Latinos and Asian origin people are disallowed necessary resources for upward mobility.

FROM ASSIMILATION TO A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RACE

The presence of anti-Latino immigrant racism (which is directed at all Latinos, not only those who are actual migrants!) and the pervasively racist depiction of Asians as seemingly smarter than other racial minorities is indicative of a social reality that sociologist Robert Park argued would not be our destiny in the twentieth century. Park proposed (1926) that a natural progression toward enmeshment into US culture would proceed unfettered for immigrants in the country. Clearly, Park vested much faith in the belief that the future would look and be better since the root of the problem was one of cultural inequality.

Moving into the latter part of the century, other studies would be framed with the assimilationist template forged by Park. Gunnar Myrdal (1948) presented an analysis of race relations that asked what was happening and what needed to be done for African Americans in the US. Myrdal's answer reveals the same unflinching, Park-like faith that Blacks would receive the opportunity to culturally align themselves into the mainstream. But what of the inherent material inequities that often defines the plight of disenfranchised racial minorities? As could be predicted, cultural solutions were reckoned to be the salve to the economic injustice that Blacks suffered. Condescendingly classifying people of color as culturally inferior proved a fertile theoretical and political

ground for conservative and so-called liberal politicians. US Senator Patrick Moynihan published one study (1965), which argued that Black families were weakly structured and that their shifty base proved to be the source of their disempowerment.

In response to an almost blindly optimistic assessment of race and ethnic relations, more critical and Marxist scholars came to the fore in the 1960s and 1970s to critique the assimilation paradigm. In particular, several Chicano scholars and scholarship on Chicanos (Acuña 1971; Barrera 1979; Moore 1970) founded their analyses on a structural interpretation of race inequality couched in the ideas of internal colonialism put into play by sociologist Robert Blauner (1972). Their theoretical modus operandi argued not for cultural assimilation but for a revisionist approach to correct the historical record so that we would be placed on the correct theoretical track. For example, the revisionist historical account of the US Southwest by Rodolfo Acuña turns Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis on its head. In *Occupied America*, Acuña (1971) argues that Chicanos were colonized and thus forcefully incorporated in the US nation-state and even then were second-class citizens.

The outcomes of the internal colonial model are essential to note because they, at long last, rejected any scholarly effort that posed racial minorities as culturally inferior. Further and most crucial for this set of introductory remarks, the internal model moves toward a focus on race. In the late 1970s, political scientist Mario Barrera (1979) conceived of class dynamics that directly produced racial inequality. Asserting that Chicanos in the US Southwest had been colonized and exploited for the economic gains of White capitalists, Barrera draws up an architecture of race and class domination that persistently privileges White over non-White seemingly without exception. Having thus

been relegated to the lowest level of the labor market produced a subjugated racial status for Mexicans in the newly acquired US territory.

In historical depictions of Asians in America, Cheng and Bonacich (1984) edit a set of articles, which advance a similar argument that Asian labor like Mexican labor played an identical historical role in building up the U.S., particularly in the West. Historian Ronald Takaki's (1989) *Strangers From a Different Shore* provides an overview of the complex and varied experiences of Asians who settled in and had long been a part of the US. Takaki, like his Chicano counterparts, focuses on the abuse that Asian laborers experienced and their historical role as cheap labor. Even after such significant scholarly pieces however, there remained a distinct need to focus and theorize on the realities of racial division and compile an analysis that looks to the interactions between these groups of color. In regards to carrying out this sort of sociological venture, the history of farm worker mobilization in California provides an ideal case study opportunity to draw up sociological theories of race and class that expands our understanding of Asian American and Latino experiences—in the past and present. Even now, this type of comprehensive study is yet to be produced.

Previously mentioned Chicano historical sociologist Tomás Almaguer (1994: 215) opined that “the absence of an explicitly sociological analysis of race relations in the American Southwest is a curious phenomenon... There is still no classic work of comparative analysis in the sociological literature of race relations specifically for this region.” His own work has moved us along the way in creating such a scholarly piece. One of the original Chicano internal colonial theorists, Almaguer (1987) distanced himself from his own theoretical roots and argued for a comparative analytical approach

in Chicano Studies. Other Chicana/o scholars joined in pointing the way toward new approaches in the late 1980s (Gutiérrez 1989; Ruiz 1986; Saragoza 1987). However, it is a tall order to expect that one piece of sociological scholarship could unite and comprehensively study the variegated topography of race and ethnicity in US Southwestern history, particularly in California. Rather than one definitive text or article, a body of comparative race and ethnic scholarship on the region is necessary. This dissertation takes one modest step in that direction.

Fortunately, published monographs and papers (Guevarra 2003; Rony Fujita 2000; Saito 1998; Molina 2006; Pulido 2006) in the last decade have been groundbreaking and laid down a path upon which comparative race and ethnic studies may navigate its way. Much of this work is not carried out by sociologists, but still offers sociological insight and models in their analyses. One example is the straightforward analysis of mixed Filipino and Mexican identity that Guevarra (2003) depicts in his piece. The paper speaks to an urban group of people who are identified as “Mexipinos” in contemporary San Diego. My study investigates and complements Guevarra’s work with a rural and historical case study that demonstrates Filipino and Mexican tension. Natalia Molina (2006) illustrates how the rules of relativity are in effect with racial hierarchical analysis. She shows how Mexicans held a more favorable position in relation to Asians in Los Angeles circa the 1930s. I also take up this condition of relativity within the racial hierarchy and assert that in 1930s California agriculture, Mexicans actually held a middle position between Japanese and Filipinos.

Finally, in terms of building successful, interracial mobilization, Laura Pulido (2006) and Leland Saito (1998) map out the trajectory and processes by which groups of

color come into a state of cohesion and mobilize successfully. In my own social movement analysis, I offer a similar contribution on a social movement that has lacked an in-depth analysis of its interracial composition. Rony Fujita (2000) provides helpful insight on the specific case of this dissertation with her own assertion that, indeed, the amalgamation of Filipinos and Mexicans into the UFW was an interracial merger.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

To start out the analysis in Chapter 2, I argue that the process of racialization and racial hierarchies disabled efforts to create interracial labor unionism for farm workers of color in California during intense labor agitation in the 1930s. Varying racial groups—Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican workers—would find it impossible to unite across the chasms of race and class. The three groups possessed different interests as a result of occupying specific positions on a racial and class hierarchy. Japanese tenant farmers rented land from White landowners but employed large groups of Filipino and Mexican workers; Japanese interests lied in preventing successful strike action. Filipino and Mexican workers were consigned to work in the fields, but even those groups' interests did not converge as they competed for sparse work opportunities in the Depression era. Therefore, Filipinos and Mexicans, while constituting colonized people in the national (White) imagination, were at odds with each other and were not assessed as equals by prevalent notions of White supremacy. Indeed, both race and class mattered for the Asian and Mexican origin labor force in California agriculture; they operated in tandem with each other to produce a racial hierarchy, which deemed some groups more capable than others.

Thereafter, Chapter 3 moves into the Bracero era of California agricultural labor history. From 1942 to 1963, farm worker activists were unable to build, or rather rebuild after the tense debacle of the 1930s, any beachhead in advancing the cause of farm worker justice. For over two decades, the primary concern among these activists was the usage of contracted Mexican laborers—often an exploited and abused group of workers. The argument went from farm labor organizers, even after the termination of the Bracero Program, that workers from Mexico lowered wages and disabled the organizing efforts conducted by and on behalf of farm workers. Further, Mexicans were reckoned to be unassimilable to US society in general and unfit for entrance to the American working class. Thus, the 1940s and 1950s were a period of social movement activity that existed in dormancy. Labor organizers casted the Bracero Program as a tool wielded by employers as they pled to the state that the employment of labor from south of the border must be ended. However, farm labor organizers cried out to a state apparatus that, in actuality, had deeply vested interests in the importation of Mexican workers.

In Chapter 4, because of the confluence of amenable internal and external factors and the merger of two farm worker unions, the farm labor movement would experience success. In 1965, California agriculture witnessed the assemblage of an interracial labor union and coalition as Filipino and Mexican workers formed what would become the UFW. Overcoming a long history of racial animosity, a patchy record of success, and the formidable power of the state and big capital, the UFW struck bargaining agreements with the California agribusiness elite. To this point, no analysis of the UFW or the farm workers movement has deeply studied and often simply ignores the significance of this racial and social movement organization merger. In contending with their distinct

historical backgrounds and differentiated interests, Filipinos and Mexicans, after decades of competing for jobs in the fields, came together. However, this event was in no way inevitable. The chapter depicts how difficult building the coalition proved to be and in Chapter 5, the dissertation puts on display how fraught with tension the merger actually was.

Therefore, the dissertation concludes by providing explanations as to how those internal and external factors, so crucial to social movement success, began to dissipate for farm workers. The union had to rely heavily on outside help; thus, as external funds subsided so did some union efforts. Hard fought and negotiated labor contracts came with inevitable expiration dates; the union could not renew those contracts because of competition with the Teamsters. Big capital sided with the Teamsters against what they characterized as a radical, left-wing UFW. The state of California, under the leadership of Ronald Reagan, was no friend of organized farm labor either and also made decisions that slowly chipped away at UFW success.

Last, the interracial coalition between Filipinos and Mexicans became frayed. This erosion of the coalition is attributable, in part, to the smaller and older demographic which Filipino workers represented. However, the composition of interracial labor unionism does not merely consist of people with variant racial and ethnic backgrounds. It is an ideological construct that requires maintenance and sustenance no matter *who* or *what kind of people* belong to the union. The UFW would not maintain that ideology of interracial unity. Instead, and sadly, the union began to displace Filipino workers—ignoring them until they were phased out. Additionally, workers from Mexico were disallowed from being part of a cross-sectional farm labor union. The UFW, under the

leadership of Cesar Chavez, would forge ahead to unionize mostly Mexican American workers and would move ahead into decline.

Last in my concluding remarks I argue that similar to the merger of Filipinos and Mexicans in the UFW, Latino Studies and Asian American Studies can, and frequently should, be part of the same pursuit. Or at the very least, both sets of literature and communities (plural within both groups) must theoretically and politically inform each other. Without making the typically bland reference that both represent the “two fastest growing groups” in the US, I contend that long before they were the “fastest growing groups,” their historical experiences have been either ignored or severely understudied. Moreover, they interacted, competed, and cooperated with each other long before they were termed as emergent groups in the twenty-first century. Sociological analysis of their histories is helpful in filling an enormous scholarly void.

CHAPTER 2: THERE WILL BE NO “ONE BIG UNION:” THE STRUGGLE FOR INTERRACIAL LABOR UNIONISM IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE, 1933-1939

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Filipino, Japanese and Mexican farm workers partook in unsuccessful labor strikes in California from 1933 to 1939. By focusing on this period of labor agitation, this chapter deals head on with the question of why striking farm workers were unable to mobilize successfully in the 1930s. I argue that White racism prevented the formation of a successful, interracial farm worker union by creating a ladder of racial preferences that hierarchically ordered Japanese, Mexicans and Filipinos. Previous studies on California farm worker mobilization efforts do not provide adequate analysis of the 1930s and the debilitating effects of racism on farm labor mobilization. The chapter demonstrates how this racial hierarchy was constructed and maintained by landowners, the state, organized labor, and the White public.

INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, large swaths of California farmland fell under the control of powerful owners in the state (Garcia 1980). By 1929, Filipinos and Mexicans formed the core of “cheap, skilled, mobile and temporary” (McWilliams [1935, 1939] 1969: 65) agricultural labor in California. Japanese in California indeed worked as farm laborers, but a considerable number were tenant farmers so that the Japanese occupied a middle ground between that of worker and owner. The power of landowners over Filipino and Mexican workers and Japanese tenant farmers was considerable. So much so, that by 1930, 66 percent of all farm workers were held in the employ of only 7 percent of landowners (Chambers 1952: 5).

Filipinos and Mexicans were the main source of agricultural labor and often competed with each other for jobs and “to a lesser extent, with Japanese, South Asians, and Koreans” (Ngai 2004: 106). Mexicans became a prime source of farm labor at the turn of the century and after 1910 constituted the bulk of farm workers in the California agricultural industry (Reisler 1976). Filipino migrants had entered California in large numbers in the 1920s; many arrived from Hawaii (Coloma 1939). But the majority had migrated directly from the Philippines (Ngai 2002).

Between 1920 and 1930, the Filipino, Mexican, and Japanese populations would increase tremendously. In 1930, California’s Filipino population numbered 30,470—a significant increase from the 1920 figure of 2,674. The Mexican population in California stood at 368,013 in 1930—a threefold increase from the 1920 figure of 121,000. As for the Japanese population, it stood at 97,456 in 1930, an upsurge from the 1920 count of 71,952 (U.S. Census Bureau 1930). Japanese and Mexicans constituted the two largest racial minority populations in 1930s California while Filipinos were the fourth largest minority group behind the Chinese. However, Filipinos seemed to be perceived as a more notorious group as they originated from a US colony. Further, Filipinos were the “new” Asian group in the state resultant of their conspicuous population increase rate of over 1000 percent between 1920 and 1930.

Decades later in 1966, Filipino and Mexican farm workers would merge their respective labor unions, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and the National Farm Workers Association, into one mostly Mexican union led by Cesar Chavez as President. But why were Filipino and Mexican workers, along with some Japanese workers, unable to succeed in the 1930s as they would in the 1960s? To date few

analyses have been offered on the 1930s farm labor strikes and either ignore or deemphasize racial dynamics. In this chapter, I argue that there was a racial hierarchy in 1930s California agriculture ordered as follows: Whites, Japanese, Mexicans, and Filipinos. The chapter demonstrates how a function of this hierarchy was to disable the assemblage of farm workers into a racially united farm labor union.

It was the ethos and practice of White supremacy that enacted a hierarchical arrangement of Asian and Mexican origin workers in which the groups were indexed and ranked from “capable” (Japanese) to “less capable” (Mexicans) and “detestable” (Filipinos). Therefore, I define White supremacy as a *racist force that distributes resources—political, economic, and social—to groups of color in such a manner that the lived experience and material outcomes of racial inequality is a differentiated existence for each group. Further, while groups of color have these varied experiences, Whites remain at the top of a racial hierarchy.* The objective of the chapter is to not only historicize the racial politics of the farm workers movement but to provide a relevant theoretical treatment of racism that is applicable in contemporary settings.

The chapter proceeds in the following manner: First, I offer a brief critical discussion of sociological and historical studies on farm labor mobilization. I argue that these studies seldom position race as a key investigative point of analysis. Thereafter, I examine historical sociological scholarship on multiracial agricultural workers. These studies put forward models that enable a rigorous comparative analysis of race and ethnicity. Next I begin presentation of my empirical case by detailing the social and historical construction of a superior White “American race” in the United States. The ensuing sections locate and discuss the disabling force of White supremacy in 1930s

California agriculture as it emanated from four key sources: landowners, the state, organized labor, and the White public.

RACE AND THE FARM WORKERS MOVEMENT

In studies of California's agricultural labor history, historians and social scientists tend toward one of two directions. Either the analyses offers a straightforward interpretation of how farm workers are economically exploited by landowners. Or the workers are placed under the microscope of social movement theorists who strive to understand how exactly the farm workers movement of the 1960s was a success. Moreover, much of the scholarship elides how Mexican and Asian origin people were oppressed in different ways.

Carey McWilliams (1942 and 1969 [1935]), the great documenter of the farm working class in California, writes on how landowners throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exploited farm workers of color. McWilliams (1969: 103) argues that "the history of farm labor in California has revolved around the cleverly manipulated exploitation, by the large growers, of a number of suppressed racial minority groups which were imported to work in the fields." Later, McWilliams ponders the 1930s strike waves and wonders why the strikes failed to coalesce into a united labor front. While illuminative, McWilliams' work poses the ensuing waves of Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and Filipino workers as exploited groups that sequentially replaced each other. He does not offer a comprehensive breakdown of these groups' racial identities and how employers acted upon groups of people that they deemed not only inferior as a class group, but as racial groups as well. Thus, McWilliams concludes that

class relationships are the prime causal factor of the lowly position of farm workers, not the racism enacted upon them.

Sociologists J. Craig Jenkins and Marshall Ganz analyze farm worker efforts to unionize. Jenkins notes the “ethnic cleavages” (1985: 73) that existed between Filipino and Mexican workers. Further, Jenkins (1985: 73) argues that such divisions were historical creations resulting from “immigration waves, the prominence of self-recruitment, and grower hiring policies.” White racism is not cited as one of the causal factors of intra-worker divisions. However, Jenkins does offer that White workers in the 1930s, many of them Dust Bowl refugees pejoratively tagged as “Okies” and “Arkies,” were favored over workers of color. However, since workers of color had become entrenched as the main source of farm labor in the 1920s (Ngai 2004: 106) and as the analytical section will demonstrate, employers preferred Asian and Mexican labor, I propose that the reason that considerable strife surrounded the strike waves of the 1930s was because racial and ethnic minority workers engaged in labor agitation.

In his study, Ganz (2000) contends that the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) was the embodiment of an “ethnic labor organization.” After doing so, the analysis imparts precious little light on the forces and parameters of racial or ethnic identity within the movement. Further, Ganz explicates the 1960s and does not mention or analyze the predicament of farm workers in the 1930s as a precursor to what would occur three decades later. Considering the short shrift that racial dynamics experience in farm worker scholarship, I turn to historical sociological work to access theoretical tools that allow interpretation of agricultural workers and race in 1930s California.

RACIAL HIERARCHY MODELS AND AGRICULTURAL LABORERS

In his study on late nineteenth century California, Tomás Almaguer (1994) argues that racial groups, many who were agricultural workers, were stratified on a racial hierarchy that descended in the following order: Whites, Mexicans, Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans. However, moving into the twentieth century, this hierarchy would transform as the Japanese curried greater favor with the White majority.

Writing on 1903 in the California community of Oxnard, Almaguer charts the unionization attempts of Japanese and Mexican beet toppers in the founding of the Japanese Mexican Labor Association (JMLA). The workers would garner some concessions, but organized labor, along with widespread racist sentiment were wary of the nation's first all non-white, interracial labor union (Jamieson 1945). Almaguer's central claim is that the specter of White supremacist practices and attitudes proved to be causal factors in the creation of a racial hierarchy. The JMLA would procure a membership of what the *Oxnard Courier* described as over 1000 "dusty skinned Japanese and Mexicans...most of them young and belonging to the lower class (cited in Almaguer 1994: 194)."

The Oxnard beet strike displayed the first genuine example of large-scale interracial farm labor unionism in California. However, Japanese and Mexican workers were perceived differently. The *Los Angeles Times* reported after a violent shooting incident surrounding the labor unrest that Mexicans were responsible "for most of the firing" and that Japanese workers were "inclined to be peaceable" (cited in Almaguer 1994: 194). Japanese and Mexican efforts were stifled and further, it was clear that though they labored in the same kind of jobs, they occupied different racial positions

within California society. Pursuant to their differentiated racial position, the class position of the Japanese would shift subsequent to the Oxnard strikes. Richard Steven Street (1998) reports that many Japanese beet toppers formed the Japanese Cooperative Contracting Company (JCCC) in February 1906—no evidence is provided that Mexican workers did or could have ascended to the position of labor contractor. Street (Ibid.:198) writes that the JCCC “did advertise itself as representing long-time Japanese sugar beet workers, but not Mexicans.”

Sociologist Moon-Kie Jung provides additional evidence of vertically aligned and fused racial and class inequality. He examines racism’s effect on the class position of *haoles* (White landowners) and Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino workers in interwar Hawaii (between World Wars one and two). Jung (1999) maps a racial hierarchy that produces a corresponding class position for each group of workers with Portuguese workers at the top, Japanese in an intermediary location, and Filipinos at the lowest position. Divided along mutually reinforced lines of race and class, the multiracial set of workers in Hawaii encountered a daunting task in striving to build interracial labor unionism, which eventually occurred.

We witness a situation in 1930s California that is not altogether different from interwar Hawaii. As in Hawaii, workers of color were unable to build a successful movement in interwar California. Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican laborers were relegated to similar, but not identical, positions on a race and class hierarchy. And as in late nineteenth century California, the chapter exhibits how all three groups were perceived in unique ways and thus subjected to group-specific forms of racism.

BUILDING THE SUPREME WHITE RACE

Thomas F. Gossett postulates that in the early twentieth century, an “American race” (1997 [1963]: 319), embodying a racial and nationalist ideology, emerged. This conception of the “American race” would be grounded in Anglo Saxon identity and domination (Horsman 1981). By pulling apart this racial and national identity, it is apparent that the ideology of White supremacy rests upon a tautological rationale: Whites are superior in every way—physically, cognitively, culturally—and thus should have more privilege and resources; furthermore, Whites have more privilege and resources because of their innate superiority.

Historian David Roediger writes on how the construction of this “American race” would perpetuate inequality as “racial formation and class formation were thus bound to penetrate each other at every turn” (Roediger 1999 [1991]: 20) in US history. Roediger proffers a thesis (Ibid.) that White supremacist oppression, in the cloak of Whiteness, creates the domain of working class identity for Whites only and ensures that Blacks simultaneously form the “anchor” (Twine and Warren 1997) of that identity. Blacks are thus the core and the foil of White workers’ superior racial identity. Workers of color are an uninvited guest, an intruder, and also perceived competition for working class identity and jobs. Most significantly, they represent a perversion of the conflated racial, national, and class identities of White working class Americans.

As for California in the 1930s, the insidious nature of White racial and class domination is evidenced in a 1934 *Los Angeles Times* editorial. Bemoaning the candidacy of socialist Upton Sinclair for governor, the editorial speaks of the difficulties confronting this “supreme” racial group in the Depression era. The paper wrote:

Until now, it might be said that the Americans were a nomadic race—at least in a spiritual sense. They lived in a land of milk and honey with great forests, free lands and untouched resources for the grasping. The pioneer period has come to an end.....This involves a readjustment of physical needs, but not of patriotic ideals.⁴

In an earlier portion of the piece, the paper speaks disparagingly of striking farm workers in the Imperial Valley, east of San Diego on the US-Mexico border. The editorial speaks to Whites of their own superiority while invoking the lowly Mexican strikers in the cotton fields of the Imperial Valley as potential imposters upon this identity.

In the face of such brash racism, farm workers of color would not form a racially united labor front. The force of White supremacy precluded such an event and the ensuing sections will explain how as the workers walked off the job. Indeed, White supremacy from varying sources would act oppressively against struggling workers of color in the California fields.

THE FARM LABOR STRIKES OF 1930S CALIFORNIA

The 1930s was a tumultuous period in California history. In economic turmoil because of the Great Depression, few groups were more deprived than farm workers of color. In the years from 1933 to 1939, the state's burgeoning agribusiness industry would witness unprecedented strike waves. Filipino and Mexican workers would comprise a large number of these striking workers (Garcia 1980; Gregory 1989). Japanese farmers would be caught in the middle as a group who possessed more capital, privilege and status than Filipinos and Mexicans, but still maintained an unequal position with respect to Whites in the racial hierarchy of the time period. Moreover, there were some Japanese farm workers involved in the mobilization efforts.

⁴ "Is This Still America?" *Los Angeles Times* August 30, 1934, pg. A4.

In 1933, thirty “major” strikes (Wollenberg 1972: 163) involving upwards of 50,000 workers took place (Jamieson 1945; Wollenberg 1972). By 1939, there would be a total of 180 agricultural strikes (McWilliams 1942; Jamieson 1945). The strikes often became physically violent episodes as landowner-controlled law enforcement and angry White mobs reacted to the agitation (McWilliams 1935; McWilliams 1942; Fisher 1953; DeWitt 1980). One worker, in the northern city of Hollister, recalled that in response to a 1936 strike, the notorious grower organization, the Associated Farmers, “tried to run the workers out of the area. But [sic] they refused to leave. Most of this was up in the southside of Hollister...Of course there was [sic] fights. They used ax handles and baseball bats.”⁵ Furthermore, the strikes were deemed criminal and frightening activity by landowners as the strike leaders were portrayed as Communists:

[The Associated Farmers] would claim that those people [CIO organizers] were around here in the area. They would hand out pictures of them to be aware of. Because they said they were probably Reds or Communists...and they told us a lot of stories how they were bad people and would cause a lot of trouble.⁶

Three years previous in a 1933 issue, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Los Angeles Police Department Chief James E. Davis as he heaped praise on his own for keeping the city safe and strike-free. Chief Davis, seemingly relieved, portrays Los Angeles as an urban oasis that escaped the labor uproar which had occurred in the exterior regions of the state, “The amount of effort and tact extended by this department in the prevention and control of labor strikes and Communistically tended riots cannot be measured in mere words or statistics.”⁷ Further, the police boss had instituted a “Red Squad” that

⁵ Labor Collection Papers, Leonard Library, Charlie Blacklock, Interview with Joan L. Zoloth, 1976.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Chief Reports Drop in Crime” *Los Angeles Times* Dec 23, 1933, pg. A2.

restricted any activities deemed subversive and operated with the blessing of government and business leaders.⁸

In the face of strike unrest, employers could rely on law enforcement, but still deemed it necessary to organize their interests and did so in amalgamating various landowners into the Associated Farmers (Chambers 1953; Jenkins 1985). Conversely, but not surprisingly, farm workers were an unstable group that would find it difficult to match the deft manner in which landowners organized. Farm workers moved from work site to work site, were marginalized people, and did not possess the commensurate resources necessary to effectively respond to powerful landowners and growers.

DIFFERENT RACES FOR DIFFERENT JOBS

Concomitant with their desire for lower wages, California landowners expressed “racial preferences” for certain kinds of workers. Indeed landowners constructed farm workers of color as unique groups, which they subjected to “qualitatively different racisms” (Jung 2002: 392). Lloyd Fisher (1953: 7) writes:

To be sure, the farmer has preferences, but these are racial preferences. The Filipino is preferred because Filipinos are presumed to be skilled agricultural workers. The Mexican is preferred to the White because of a presumption that he is less ‘independent.’ The Negro is least favorably regarded.

As it were, Filipinos were regarded as appropriate for certain kinds of crops such as lettuce and asparagus (Fisher 1953; Jenkins 1985), but posed a threat as labor agitators. As for Mexicans, they were perceived as a malleable group of dimwits who could be exploited with ease and sent back home over the border to Mexico where they remained an accessible, cheap labor force (Hoffman 1974).

⁸ The LAPD openly admits this on their website: www.lapdonline.org/history (1926-1950).

Moreover, Whites were not excluded from this racial schema. In fact, they formed the justification as to why landowners would desire cheap workers of color. White workers were perceived as a group who would stake their claim to the status of workers who deserved a higher wage. Additionally, White workers did not visualize themselves as mere farm workers; the performance of farm labor by Whites made the occupation a loftier calling. One White worker recalled that previous to “thinking of agricultural labor as Mexican work....There were whites in the fields, whites in the packinghouses. Before, it never used to be a disgrace to work in the fields.”⁹

But even in the 1930s and with the influx of Okies and Arkies and thus a seemingly substantial and cheap labor reservoir, the powers that be contended that Whites were physiologically unequipped to carry out farm work anyway. One official in the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, George P. Clements, argued that farm labor was a type of work “to which the oriental and Mexican due to their crouching and bending habits are fully adopted, while the white is physically unable to adapt himself” (cited in Hoffman 1974: 10). Further, the historical record indicates that Whites were certainly in the packinghouses and sheds, but not out in the fields in large numbers (Ngai 2002).

In the comparison of “oriental” and Mexican labor, landowners desired Mexican workers above everyone else. Compared to Filipino and Japanese workers they were not perceived as people with the capacity to strike. Further, Mexican workers were in large supply and easily disposable, but this is far too simple of an explanation as to why Mexicans were the most prized type of worker. One California landowner and walnut farmer, George Teague (1944: 141), opined that Mexicans were the favorite worker of land barons because they are “naturally adapted to agricultural work, particularly in the

⁹ Labor Collection Papers, Leonard Library, Holman Day, interview with Joan L. Zoloth, 1976.

handling of fruits and vegetables.” Again, we observe the racialization of workers of color that constructs them as apropos for agricultural work. However, the key point here is that Mexican workers offered the ideal quality of being physically predisposed to do agricultural labor.

In contrast to Mexican workers, Filipino and Japanese workers were racialized as labor agitators who threatened the racial and class order. Historian Cletus Daniel (1981) argues that Japanese workers had developed their own niche in the California agricultural industry along with effective strategies to bargain for higher wages. While this certainly was the case, I will add that subsequent to their ascension to the class level of tenant farmer, many Japanese farm operators—like White landowners—possessed an interest in snuffing out strike actions. Indeed there were Japanese farm workers but it is essential to note Japanese farmers’ unique position as an employer group. By 1910, the same year that Mexicans came to dominate the agricultural labor force, many Japanese had become either growers or sharecroppers in California (Iwata 1992) and oversaw more than 170,000 acres of California farmland, which was rented from White landowners (Wollenberg 1972). Further, legal mandates by the California Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 barred Japanese Californians from becoming property owners and blocked any ascension to the racial and class status of White landowners.

THE “DESIRABLE” JAPANESE

Thus, the racial hierarchy in 1930s California agriculture constructed and reified a racialized social system in which the Japanese were regarded by Whites more favorably as compared to Filipinos and Mexicans. For example, near the northern cities of Vacaville and Winters, one local resident in 1935 stated that “The most desirable renter

that they [landowners] have is the Japanese. They are not as bad at impoverishing the soil as the Spanish and the Italians.”¹⁰ In contrast, Filipinos built a “reputation for militancy and radicalism,” (Daniel 1981: 109) which made them the least desirable group of people.

Still, in accordance with their unique position as worker and employer, Japanese workers took interest in labor mobilization. One flyer distributed to Japanese residents in San Francisco denounced oppression of racial minorities and called for racial and working class unity:

The condition of the Japanese, along with Chinese, Filipino and Negro masses is getting worse under the Merriam administration and the ‘New Deal.’ The Japanese is hired for cheap wages and is discriminated against in daily life.... Workers and poor farmers have no reason to struggle among themselves on national or color lines;-- all are exploited by the bankers and landlords.¹¹

Indeed, Japanese workers’ and tenant farmers’ racial and class identities negotiated a tight intermediary space between Whites and those beneath the Japanese on the ladder of racial preferences: Japanese growers in Imperial Valley replaced their Mexican workers with Whites as will be shown, but Japanese workers in San Francisco called out for interracial cooperation.

Yet, Japanese tenant farmers cooperated with Whites in maintaining the stratified social order of the day. For example, in dealing with Mexican strikers in 1935, a message in English and Japanese, was sent out to growers/employers in the Imperial Valley: the “NOTICE” was composed by a committee of three White growers (Jack, Harrigan, and Beal) and three Japanese growers (Uchida, Sasaki, and Matsumoto) in conjunction with General P.D. Glassford, who had been called in by the government to

¹⁰ Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Term Paper Interview by Ruth Merrick with unnamed respondent, April 1935, (Box 43, Folder 12).

¹¹ Young Library, Yoneda Papers, “Why the Japanese Should Vote Communist,” August 1934, (Box 152, Folder 2).

settle unrest in the area. The memorandum dictated that only American workers (read: White) could be employed in shed work. Ngai (2004) indicates that indeed shed work had been the exclusive right of White workers and workers of color were contained to work in the fields. Significantly, the command ordered “that the alien Mexican packers be replaced by Americans returning them [Mexicans] to the field work.”¹² Thus, Japanese growers worked in conjunction with their White counterparts to head off potential strike action.

1933 in El Monte, ten miles east of Los Angeles, further exemplifies the hierarchy. Japanese growers faced demands for higher wages from Mexican workers, who they employed as berry pickers. As strikes ensued, White institutions in the community, represented most prominently by the El Monte Chamber of Commerce, ensured that Japanese growers made concessions (Wollenberg 1972). This action on the part of the Chamber of Commerce is not to be mistaken for magnanimity toward Mexicans. Local public aid programs were breaking under the strain of providing support to striking workers. Expressing deep concern for the public coffers and taking into account that Japanese growers could not pay rent to local White landowners if berries were not picked, the pressure to concede was insurmountable.

Further, Wollenberg (1972) describes how Mexican workers believed that racial tensions were at play with their Japanese employers in El Monte—a situation not contained to the southern portion of the state. Filipino workers also maintained that their Japanese overseers looked down on them. Up north in Salinas, one Filipino worker expressed deep animosity for Japanese bosses, “Most of the farms then [in the 1930s]

¹² Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Flyer, (Box 46, Folder 11).

were run by Japanese. You had to really earn your wages. They were slave drivers. They said if you weren't working fast enough, you were out of work."¹³

Another worker uprising occurred in Venice in April 1935, beginning with strikes in celery fields, 4,500 Filipino, Mexican and Japanese workers walked off the job and spurred on a series of mini-strike waves throughout the community. No love was apparently lost between the workers and their Japanese employers as “during the labor troubles, kidnapping [sic], rioting, raids, pitched battles, and the use of airplanes from which to drop rocks on field workers were resorted to.” Nobura Tsuchida (1984) narrates how the dispute was resolved with a labor deal agreed upon between the workers’ representatives—the California Farm Laborers Association and the Federation of Farm Workers of America—and the growers’ organization—the Southern California Farm Federation of Los Angeles County (SCFFLAC), which held within its membership 800 Japanese farmers.¹⁴ Though the SCFFLAC was a Japanese organization, Tsuchida (Ibid.) reports, based on his reading of a Los Angeles Japanese newspaper [*Rafu Shimpō*], that throughout the strikes growers drew the backing of local law enforcement agencies, Japanese civic organizations, the US Immigration Service, and the Japanese Consulate. The workers appealed to the broader public with a meeting at Union Church in Little Tokyo where spokespeople for Filipino and Mexican laborers were provided an opportunity to plead the workers’ case. However, by early June the strikes were ended when “Mexican workers unilaterally accepted hourly rates ten cents lower than the strikers request (Ibid.: 459).”

¹³ Labor Collection Papers, Leonard Library, Manuel Luz, interview with Joan L. Zoloth, 1976.

¹⁴ “Field Strike Called Off” *Los Angeles Times* July 10, 1936, pg. A9.

Japanese tenant farmers and White landowners set clearly defined goals: to maintain a status quo of low wages and a tight grip on their labor force. In carrying out this agenda, landowners and farm operators had several factors operating in their favor. As for workers, they had little to rely upon except for their own ability to walk off the job and eventually the Communist Party. Communist ideals represented an ideological construct that operated to draw Filipinos, Japanese, and Mexicans together under the banner of exploited workers. Throughout the early portion of the 1930s, the Communist Party supported Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) was a key player in most of the labor agitation. Most prominently, the TUUL was the driving force behind the formation of the Cannery and Agricultural Industrial Workers' Union (CAIWU), which had organized Mexican berry pickers in El Monte.

Daniel (1981) contends that Mexican participation in TUUL sanctioned activity should not be equated to acquiescence with Communist philosophy. Yet, Jamieson (1945) points out that prominent labor organizers, which he specifically names—Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican—indeed subscribed to Communist ideals. However, for Mexicans in El Monte, Communist ideals were not adequate to address their conflict with Japanese bosses as it required them to assert themselves *purely* as workers—the struggle could only be understood as class struggle. According to Wollenberg (1972), Mexican strikers felt that there was racial as well as class tension between themselves and their Japanese employers and may have disagreed with the way in which the CAIWU attempted to deracialize the labor strife.

Further, historian Eiichiro Azuma (1998: 164) demonstrates that indeed tense race relations were at play between Japanese farm operators and their workers. Azuma reports

on a tendency for Japanese tenant farmers to identify Mexicans “as more ‘docile’ and ‘better’ than Filipinos, who had already struck against farmers elsewhere in California.” However, this racialized differentiation of workers, in which Mexicans were considered more favorable, occurred when Japanese employers could exclude Filipinos. Azuma (1998: Footnote 90) asserts, based on his readings of Japanese newspapers, that when Mexicans did carry out strike activity, such as in El Monte, “Filipinos often became a ‘good’ race—that is, a friend of the Issei farming class—while Mexicans were considered the main menace.” Thus, the ordering of the racial hierarchy was open to the manipulation of those groups who sat atop of it.

THE STATE AND INTERRACIAL LABOR UNIONISM

With few resources available and few advocates to defend them, working with known Communists was perhaps the only alternative for Filipino, Japanese, and Mexican workers but it was a perilous relationship upon which to embark. In 1919, the California legislature had enacted the State Syndicalism Law. Thereafter, state law deemed a criminal anyone who subscribed to “any doctrine or precept” which advocated or employed actions that would serve to create “a change in industrial ownership or control, effecting any political change” (text of the statute cited from Solow 1935: 14).

Subsequently, the presence of Communist led activity and convenient anti-Communist legislation would provide landowners in California with good reason to coalesce into their own anti-labor organization: The Associated Farmers.

The Associated Farmers as a name for the landowners’ organization was a misnomer. The group was a complex of powerful land barons, big industry—such as businesses, which shipped and processed agricultural products—and the banking sector—

in particular, the Bank of America. The organization would utilize the State Criminal Syndicalism Law to deal, in effect, a deathblow to CAIWU-led strikes, bringing them to an end by 1934, and thereby dissolving the only organization, which advocated for interracial labor unionism. In a 1934 report by the Associated Farmers, which can be characterized as big capital's White paper on the strike waves of the period, the organization stated that the program of the CAIWU and "the Communist Party...embodies the overthrow of the American form of government by force, suppression of religion, and the establishment of a central control, or dictatorship, by the workers themselves." Furthermore, though the report spoke most specifically about southern California, it identified Communist led agricultural strikes as a statewide/industry-wide problem: "It is a program [labor strikes] primarily directed toward the perishable crops of California agriculture. It is a situation which must be met by agriculture as a whole."¹⁵

In 1935, "agriculture as a whole" along with the aid of the state apparatus would finish off the CAIWU in a Sacramento courthouse where union leaders were convicted of violating the Syndicalism statute. However, the trial in 1935 constituted far more than a crackdown on Communist activity. I contend that the legal verdict was a state-sanctioned renouncement of interracial labor unionism. The prosecuting lawyer in the case, Sacramento district attorney Neil McAllister, informed the jury that "the defendants do not believe in religion or the superiority of the white to the negro and yellow races" (Solow 1935: 20). Moreover, McAllister argued that convicting the defendants would be tantamount to carrying out the tenets of patriotic duty (Solow 1935: 20). Indeed, the

¹⁵Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Report by the Associated Farmers: "The Imperial Valley Farm Labor Situation," April 16, 1934, (Box 46, Folder 11).

strike leaders had engaged in not only Communist action, but had done so with the other. Consequently, farm workers of color in 1930s California faced not only a battle for higher wages, but more significantly, they encountered the devastating force of White supremacist ideology which worked to disassemble any effort to create interracial working class consciousness. These workers constituted an inferior group of people in which race and class were “mutually constitutive” (Jung 2006) and acted to relegate workers of color to the lowest levels of the labor market.

However, Filipino and Mexican farm labor activism did not fade into decline. Stuart Jamieson (1945: 129) reports that “farm labor unions grew rapidly among Filipinos, as among Mexicans” subsequent to the CAIWU’s state-engineered demise. However, growers reasoned that Filipinos were the party responsible for priming the labor movement pump. A newspaper account from Brawley in the Imperial Valley offered that Filipinos (Ibid.: 131, cited from the *Brawley News*) “brought labor disturbances in the valley” and that “growers are not pleased.” Though growers may have focused upon Filipinos as the central labor agitation threat, Jamieson (Ibid.: 132) reasons that Filipino “won their greatest gains when they had cooperated closely with organized Mexicans and whites.”

UNDESIRABLES: FILIPINOS AND MEXICANS IN THE NATIONAL SPACE

Though Filipinos and Mexicans underwent the threat of repatriation, both groups were filtered out differently in the national imagination. They were colonized subjects who were neither American citizen nor outright foreigner (Ngai 1999; Ngai 2002; Ngai 2004). Coming from a colonial outpost, workers from the Philippines were not subject to the 1924 Immigration Act. Though the Filipino population in California in 1930 of 30,500

did not compare with that of the Mexican population of 368,000, H. Brett Melendy (1967) asserts that Filipinos were significant to the White majority as they represented the dreaded “third Oriental wave” to invade California (subsequent to the Chinese and Japanese). This “Oriental” wave was not merely a physically different colonial subject. They were a hygienically unfit group who were predisposed to engage in labor agitation and sexual relationships with White women.

Consequently, between 1933 and 1935, the Congress would consider a series of bills that would move legislative efforts toward the institution of a Filipino repatriation program. On July 10, 1935, President Roosevelt signed House Resolution 6464 into law. Two provisions in the law stand out. First, the law’s text is clear that Filipinos would not be forcefully deported from the country. However, another provision mandated that any Filipino person who took the offer of free passage back to the Philippines would not be allowed re-entry into the country. As a result, there were few takers of the “offer;” only 2,036 individuals would end up choosing to return the Philippines when the program terminated in July 1940 (Ngai 2002). Historian Mae Ngai (1999) argues that though only a few accepted the offer of free passage (most from the middle-class), the goal of repatriation efforts are more nuanced than being simple removal programs. They are a message to the targeted group—regardless of whether they vacate or not—that they are undesirables.

In contrast, Mexicans were not current colonial subjects in the 1930s, but had been the objects of conquest by the US subsequent to the Mexican American War of 1848 (Acuña 1972; Barrera 1979; Montejano 1986). Throughout the 1930s, Mexicans would be repatriated by an illegal program that would force Mexican descent people,

some of them US citizens, “back” to Mexico. Mexicans, not unlike Filipinos, served well as an economic scapegoat in tight economic times (Hoffman 1974; Balderrama and Rodríguez 1995). Consequently, from the years 1930 to 1937, over 500,000 Mexicans would be deported from the United States. Many of these people would be children who held US citizenship (Hoffman 1974).

The repatriation of Mexicans from the US was a forcible removal of people from many parts of the country. Efforts were carried out in Chicago, Detroit, and Gary, Indiana. However, the main stage for the repatriation program of Mexicans was in California, particularly Los Angeles (Hoffman 1974; Gutiérrez 1995). McWilliams (1968) argues that the impetus for directing repatriation efforts toward California’s Mexican population was, in part, at the directive of landowners. The propertied elite was deeply concerned, as already illustrated by the formation of the Associated Farmers, in regards to any labor organization farm workers would endeavor to create. Removing Mexicans from California would, hopefully for powerful landowners, extract some portion of the labor agitation threat.

The number of repatriated Mexicans far outnumbered Filipinos who returned to the Philippines. Yet, Filipinos appeared to be the group, which drew considerable ire as compared to Mexicans as seen in the previous section. Mexicans were assessed as reliable, necessary labor. Balderrama and Rodríguez (2006: 101) write that in the 1930s, the powers that be “were repeatedly implored to desist from repatriating indigent Mexicans until after the crops had been harvested.” Further, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce official, George P. Clements, contrasted Mexicans as more desirable than

Filipinos who were deemed (Ibid.: 101) “the most worthless, unscrupulous, shiftless, semi-barbarian that has ever come to our shores.”

A possible reason that Mexican labor remained more desirable—even in the midst of deportations—is that Mexicans often worked as a family unit (Ibid.: 45-48).

Conversely, Filipino men were single and lacked a sizable number of potential Filipina marriage partners. The lack of family meant that Filipinos were solo workers, bringing no additional laborers in the form of immediate relatives, and were conceived as a threat to Whites and, in particular, White women. A White Salinas resident, in 1930, expressed abhorrence of Filipinos since “they will not leave our white girls alone and frequently intermarry” (cited in Melendy 1977: 67). A San Joaquin County labor official remarked that a Filipino contractor “brings women (white women) into the camp as well as booze” (Ibid.).

Indeed, as racially stigmatized groups, both Filipino and Mexican workers found few allies in their organization efforts and little protective cover from state-operated repatriation. However, Mexicans were not envisaged as the sexual threat that Whites projected onto Filipino men. Further, Filipino workers would find themselves differentiated from Mexicans as unpalatable to the White organized labor power structure.

“ONE BIG UNION”?: (WHITE) ORGANIZED LABOR SAYS “NO”

Organized labor was not receptive of Filipino and Mexican organization efforts either. Specifically, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was unwilling to be racially inclusive of all agricultural laborers. In the development of an official policy toward both Filipinos and Mexicans, the California Federation of Labor (CFL) would officially

support the exclusion of Filipinos, in slight favor of Mexicans, from the agricultural labor force. This policy was reiterated from 1927 to 1931 at annual CFL conventions (Fuller 1991: 53). Though on a small scale, this racism-laden, nativist sentiment was reflected at a more macro and state-level when the US Congress instituted anti-Filipino legislation in the 1930s (Baldoz 2004).

Moreover, agricultural workers, no matter their racial and ethnic identity, had been disallowed the right to collective bargaining when they were excluded from the provisions of the Wagner Act of 1935 (more formally known as the National Labor Relations Act) (Mariano 1940). This distinction of being an industrial worker was necessary to engage in the labor negotiation process. Both landowners and organized labor subscribed to this view of workers as inhabiting categories of either industrial or non-industrial worker. However, the designation moved beyond job classification and disproportionately harmed workers of color, especially those in California's agricultural industry. Workers of color could not be categorized as industrial workers since they did not labor in the sheds and packinghouses. In defining laborers as industrial workers, the implication for farm workers of color was that to be defined as an industrial worker meant being White.

In February 1937, 97 delegates representing more than 100,000 farm workers met in San Francisco in an AFL sponsored gathering and called to dissolve this class, racial, and labor line drawn between industrial and non-industrial workers. Representatives called for "one big union" which would unite both "cannery and field workers" (Chambers 1952: 35). However, the AFL was in favor of no such action. Oddly, the organization leadership desired to organize farm workers, such as Filipino lettuce

workers in Salinas, but was unwilling to impart upon these workers actual membership in the labor union (Dewitt 1980). Unsurprisingly, as they faced marginalization from labor union organizations, Stuart Jamieson (1945: 179) asserts that several among “the more articulate elements in Filipino communities favored a separate racial labor movement.” Subsequent to the strike waves of the 1930s, Filipino workers formed the Filipinos Agricultural Laborers Association (FALA) which Jamieson (Ibid.: 187) termed “the largest field workers’ union in California” in 1940.

Unsatisfied delegates at the San Francisco meeting founded the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), which was affiliated with the recently formed CIO (Committee for Industrial Organization—later to be known as the Congress for Industrial Organizations). Within the AFL and the newly minted CIO, workers were supposed to be industrial workingmen. Citing this shortcoming, UCAPAWA focused on unionizing workers within the agricultural industry who worked in the processing plants *and* in the fields (Chambers 1952). Therefore, a key UCAPAWA initiative was to blur the line between the industrial and agricultural worker in order to assemble workers across these lines. Thus by implication, this was a movement toward interracial unionism.

As it were, the CIO was a newly formed umbrella organization made up of a few unions who held some contempt for the AFL. That is to say that the UCAPAWA had allies, but they would not be powerful enough to overcome the AFL and its resistance to farm workers of color. Nevertheless, by the time of UCAPAWA’s first national meeting in Denver in July 1937, many Filipino, Mexican, and Japanese labor unions would become incorporated into the structure of UCAPAWA (Jamieson 1945). However,

historian Howard DeWitt (1980) asserts that even within the confines of the UCAPAWA, Filipino demands were not being met.

While Filipinos and Mexicans had cooperated with Japanese and even White workers in agricultural strikes, especially in CAIWU-led activity in 1933, many workers were stationed within group specific labor organizations. Mexican workers had organized unions such as El Confederacion de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos del Estado de California (CUCOM), the Mexican Agricultural Workers Union, and the American Mexican Union. Filipino workers organized a litany of unions, among them were the Filipino Labor Association, the Filipino Labor Supply Association, and the Filipino Labor Union Incorporated of Guadalupe (Jamieson 1945). Though they maintained their own labor organizations, there are examples of cooperation between Filipino and Mexican workers much to the chagrin of landowners and Japanese tenant farmers. This is evidenced by the previously noted Venice strikes in 1935.

As previously noted, Stuart Jamieson (1945) asserts that when there was cooperation between Filipinos, Mexicans, and Whites, there were significant labor victories. However, these successes did not deter some in the Filipino community from an insistence on Filipino-only agricultural labor unions. Individuals, such as the secretary of the Filipino Labor Union Incorporated (FLU), C.D. Mensalves, “favored a policy of racial exclusiveness and opposed affiliation with other labor organizations” (Jamieson 1945: 132). This may be attributable to the ways landowners and the labor union power structure (as embodied by the AFL) racialized workers of color and viewed industrial, White workers as superior and labor union eligible. But clearly, Filipinos underwent a differentiated experience with racism as compared to Mexicans. Labor unions did not

want them. As deportable subjects, they were characterized as “semi-barbarian.”

Furthermore, Filipino workers’ position at the bottom of a racial hierarchy is evidenced further by the racist violence to which they were subjected in 1930s California.

THE RACIST TERRORISM OF THE WHITE PUBLIC

Historian Eric T.L. Love (2004: 164) writes that US colonization of the Philippines constitutes the “culminating event...on race and American imperialism in the late nineteenth century.” Love shows that US imperialists, ever cognizant of connections between race and colonization and hoping to obfuscate those links, operated to “*remove* race from the debates” [Love’s emphasis] (Ibid.: 164) over a potential takeover of the archipelago. Advocates for empire building aimed to defuse concerns in regards to how the U.S. state could govern a racially mixed empire. One such concern articulated by a former government official warned the reading public that governing the Philippines would mean “running the risk incident to the admission of distant and alien peoples to full citizenship” (cited from *North American Review* in Ibid.: 181). *The Nation* voiced concern that annexation of the Philippines opened the door for “incorporation into our system of an immense group of islands” and “eight millions of people of various races, that are for the most part either savage or but half-civilized” (Ibid.: 181).

Indeed the effects of racism rooted within imperial endeavors persisted into twentieth century as Filipinos were subjected to White terrorism in 1930s California. While anti-Filipino terrorism that occurred in the year 1930 obviously predates the strike waves between 1933 and 1939, I assert that anti-Filipino riots in that year provide a reliable barometric measurement of the social atmosphere, which Filipinos experienced throughout the decade.

Beginning in Watsonville, racist anger toward Filipinos would crystallize in violent scenes. On January 19, upwards of 500 “blue collar” Whites marched through the town proclaiming that Filipinos posed a threat to society as a “social and sexual problem” (DeWitt 1976: 46-47). The fear that Filipino men would engage in sexual relationships with White women caused a great stir in the local community. Filipinos would respond to the onslaught of White gangs by fighting back, but would be unable to gain an upper hand in how the local media would depict them. Historian Howard DeWitt cites one newspaper whose coverage of the riots was summed up in a headline, which read “FILIPINOS RIOT ON WATSONVILLE STREETS” (cited from the *Santa Cruz News* in DeWitt 1980: 47). The newspaper thus posed Filipinos as the rioters though much evidence points to the fact that “Filipino riots” were a justified reaction to the White mobs.

Moreover, the state of California issued a post-riot report on Filipino migration into the state that did not allow a favorable depiction of the group among the White public. The bulletin (State of California, Department of Industrial Relations 1930: 72) opined that “Filipinos are taking the places of white workers in many of the occupations in which they find employment upon arrival into California.” Taking under consideration several instances of rioting against Filipinos in Watsonville, Exeter, Tulare county, and Monterey county, the state report concludes (Ibid: 76) that Whites were understandably upset since “the appearances and customs of the Islanders...aroused the acrimony and hostility of the white residents.”

One Filipino farm worker in a community nearby Watsonville described a trying daily life in the 1930s:

Even if you had the money we weren't allowed in hotels or in some restaurants they refused to serve you. Right in Salinas, that was so. If you walked the street even with friends of another race, the people would say 'hey gugu, monkey.' That's the way people treated us.¹⁶

Paul A. Kramer (2006: 127) offers that the racist epithet, “gugu,” was part and parcel of a “distinctive Philippine American colonial vocabulary that focused hatreds around a novel enemy.” Though the racial slur originated in the Philippines from US military personnel as Kramer argues, in California it was only a portion of derogatory practices and language that the White public would use to oppress Filipino workers.

A bit north of San Francisco in Vacaville, about 90 miles from Salinas, the local police chief cited Filipinos as a threat to the wellbeing of the local community. The chief, in 1935, attested that “the Filipinos are the least desirable additions to any community” and showed an interviewer a “large exhibit of arms [guns and various weapons]” that had allegedly had been taken from local Filipinos. Further, the chief contrasted Filipinos and other groups such as the Chinese with a positive assessment of Japanese people who took “care of each other and do not cause any trouble in the community.”¹⁷ A local judge in San Francisco, in 1936, deemed Filipinos as “scarcely more than savages” (cited in Kramer 2006: 407).

As for the riots in Watsonville, they would subside within a few days, but would culminate in the death of one Filipino farm worker who was gunned down in his living quarters located on the ranch where he worked. Back in the Philippines, the *Manila*

¹⁶ Labor Collection Papers, Leonard Library, Manuel Luz, interview with Joan L. Zoloth, 1976.

¹⁷ Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, letter to Paul S. Taylor from Ruth Merrick, April 30, 1935, (Box 43, Folder 12).

Times termed the riots an interracial conflict calling the chaos in Watsonville “racial warfare” (Ibid.: 411). One White worker confirms that anti-Filipino violence was not a once-occurring affair and pointed out that such incidents were commonplace: “They [Filipinos in the 1930s] took a pretty bad beating themselves. The shipper would burn them out of their camps or go out at nights and shoot into their houses.”¹⁸ Congressman Arthur M. Free, who represented Watsonville (seemingly only the White portion of the population), argued that the White gangs had been all but baited into the violence because Filipino men were “luring young white girls into degradation” (cited from the *Manila Times* in Kramer 2006: 412). The tension would spread to nearby San Jose where local Filipino leaders would advise Filipinos in the local community to “stay off the streets” for their own safety (DeWitt 1976). The threat of racist riots notwithstanding, landowners wanted to maintain access to cheap labor. Eventually, law enforcement would see to the protection of Filipino farm workers, but the voice of the White public, in the form of violent racism—like landowners, the government, and labor unions—had been sounded.

CONCLUSION

Filipino, Mexican, and Japanese farm workers sought social and economic transformation in 1930s California. However, the number of obstacles they would encounter would make successful collective mobilization impossible during the decade. This chapter has argued that White supremacy, in various guises, prevented the formation of a successful farm workers’ movement by constructing a racial hierarchy that descended in the following order: Japanese, Mexican, and Filipino.

The most prominent part of White supremacist practice was located within California’s powerful set of landowners who held substantial numbers of Filipino and

¹⁸ Labor Collection Papers, Leonard Library, Holman Day, interview with Joan L. Zoloth, 1976.

Mexican workers in their employ. Employers would assess Mexicans as hardy, subservient workers and Filipinos as wily, labor agitators. As for the Japanese, they would occupy a middle ground position as they constituted both an employer and worker group.

Further, landowners gave voice and organization to their interests in the form of the Associated Farmers. Striking workers had an effect on the California agricultural industry though they would win few concessions for themselves. Strikes drew the ire of landowners and they responded to worker organization efforts in kind with the destruction of the CAIWU in 1935. This action was symbolic of the sort of sway that the Associated Farmers held in the California political, economic, and social structure. Additionally, the tension between workers and growers was not a simplistic White/non-White confrontation. As has been demonstrated, Filipino and Mexican workers often struck against their Japanese employers.

Additionally, the federal government acted to physically remove Filipinos and Mexicans from California as both groups were deemed unfit for American society. The government would have little success in repatriating Filipinos. However, it should be noted that the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934 would solve much of the so-called “Filipino Problem” in California. The end of official US rule of the Philippines would also ensure that Filipino people could no longer enter the country in large numbers. Rather than seeking to remove Filipinos, the US government would simply bar them from further entry. As for Mexicans, they were subject to particularly more violent removal efforts. Mexicans, especially in Los Angeles, were removed from the US in substantial

numbers—many of them children and citizens. However, in the face of White supremacy, their claim to citizenship would be meaningless.

Also, labor unions would be unwilling to incorporate Filipino and Mexican workers into their organizations. While making some efforts to unionize farm workers, the AFL—the most prominent labor organization—ultimately would not relent to racial minority agricultural laborers. Like the government and its repatriation efforts, labor unions deemed Filipinos as particularly unfit for membership within the identity of free, White industrial workers.

Last, the broader White public acted violently against workers of color. Anti-Filipino riots in California are evidence of this. While no examples are provided of massive anti-Mexican riots in California, indeed these riots may be another example of how Filipinos and Mexicans were differentiated from each other. Mexicans were the “acceptable unacceptable” group. Indeed, this may have had some effect on the racial and ethnic divisions within the multiracial farm working class. Three decades later in 1966, they would overcome a history of acrimony in the merger of their two unions and move towards landmark farm labor concessions.

However, the condition of race and labor relations within California agribusiness would undergo sudden change in the 1940s. The inception of the Bracero Program along with the internment of Japanese origin people would extract Japanese tenant farmers and workers from the industry. However, this was no haphazard shift within California agriculture. The next chapter addresses this shift and the role of the state in bringing workers from Mexico into California and removing Japanese origin people from their economic niche as tenant farmers.

CHAPTER 3: THE STATE GIVETH AND TAKETH: BRACEROS, JAPANESE INTERNMENT, AND ANTI-CITIZEN FARM WORKERS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In 1942, the onset of World War Two altered California agriculture. The previous chapter detailed the structural power of racism that disabled the coherence of a multiracial labor force into a racially united labor movement. While it would be inaccurate to argue that the state had no interest in the strike waves of the 1930s—indeed the state had interests, the decade of the 1940s signals the entrance of the state as a key player in race and labor relations within California agriculture. How did the state affect the condition of race and labor relations during this period?

Most apparently, though insufficiently analyzed in California agricultural labor history, the state subtracted Japanese tenant farmers and laborers from the agriculture industry via internment. Further, the state added, over the course of twenty plus years, Mexican workers to the labor force with “approximately 4.5 million work contracts [which] were signed” and sent “the vast majority of workers...to three states (California, Arizona, and Texas)” (Mize 2006: 86). The institution of a guest worker program drew the ire of farm workers organizers and farm workers as they argued that it lowered wages and prevented the formation of a viable farm workers union. As for White farm operators, Mexican labor supplied at the cheap and the extraction of Japanese tenant farmers indicated good fortune. Still, the state’s control of the guest workers program was a point of contention for these owners and farmers who wished to exact sole control of the labor procurement process. Indeed, the state not only managed the Bracero program but possessed distinct interests in controlling the flow of Mexican labor into the

US Southwest while protecting the nation from the supposed threat of Japanese people in the country.

I use the chapter to exhibit how the state initially played an external role in the farm workers movement but in the war era became a key, internal player in the racial and economic politics of farm labor. As the Bracero Program took flight in April 1942, the US acted on orders from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to relocate Japanese Americans to internment camps set up throughout the US West and in Arkansas. The imprisonment of Japanese Americans immediately created a vacuum in the agricultural labor market. However, the entrance of Mexican workers to fill the labor void while robbing Japanese tenant farmers of their economic position would leave farm labor activists dissatisfied. As they persisted in protest of the Bracero program, an anti-immigrant discourse infrastructure took root with farm labor leaders as they voiced opposition to non-citizen workers who had immigrated legally and illegally into the US. As part of the dissertation's larger argument, I contend that the enactment and practice of the Bracero Program and Japanese internment are illustrative of the type of exploitation that a White racial state exacts upon Asian and Mexican origin people.

INTRODUCTION

In 2006 the Congressional Research Service (CRS) issued a report citing the pros and cons of reimplementing an agricultural guest worker program in the United States. Mexicans would provide the bulk of this guest labor force if such a bill were to be pressed into law. The objective of the CRS study is to assess the effect of guest workers' salaries on domestic, citizen workers' wage levels. The report concludes that a contemporary Bracero initiative would in all likelihood produce an "adverse effect" on

citizen workers' wages. However, it adds that "these adverse effects might differ today depending on the extent to which US farm labor and product markets have changed over time."¹⁹ While the report delivers its message with a deliberately objective tone and clinical analysis, it seems to argue that if guest workers were disallowed entry into the country, undocumented workers would have an adverse effect on wages anyway. Therefore, the solution may lie in simply allowing legalized foreign workers into the agribusiness labor market.

Eighteen years previous to the CRS study, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act (CLA) of 1988. The law's purpose was to provide redress to those Japanese people who had been interned by the US state during World War Two. The statute represents an acknowledgement by the US government that the imprisonment of Japanese people during the war was produced "largely by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." In consideration of the state mandated programs of the 1940s that contracted Mexican workers and interned Japanese people, it is compelling that in the contemporary era, the government takes investigatory measures to assess the possibility of renewing a guest worker program directed at Mexicans—the program is not even critiqued as being potentially exploitive. On the other hand, the government—led by a reactionary at the executive level—decides to admit its error. I do not infer or suggest that by virtue of the CLA Japanese origin internees received a fair shake. In fact, if anything the practice of internment has laid down the groundwork for the imprisonment of people at Guantanamo Bay after September 11, 2001.²⁰ Production

¹⁹ Congressional Research Service Report 95-712, *The Effects on U.S. Farm Workers of an Agricultural Guest Worker Program*, by Linda Levine.

²⁰ Disgustingly, some so-called critics such as Michelle Malkin (2004) argue that Japanese internment is a useful model for the "war on terror."

of the CRS report indicates that the state wishes to learn lessons from the past in order to procure labor efficiently but apprehends no lesson—or more disconcertingly, simply ignores it—on the dangers of racializing a group of people as enemies of the state.

In detailing the role of the state and its effect on Asian and Mexican origin workers, the case of labor conflict and race relations within 1940s California agriculture provides an ample opportunity to understand state interests. The previous chapter narrated and analyzed how, in the 1930s, farm worker mobilization and struggle was fraught with the tension of labor and racial conflict. We observed four central racial groups: Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and Whites with varying agendas as they emerge into conflict with each other. However, the preceding narrative has mostly focused upon conflictive interactions between owners and workers. Beginning in the 1940s, the state entered the fray as a regulator and contractor of farm labor.

With codification of the Bracero Program by the Congress in 1942—the same year that Executive Order 9066 would be issued and legalize Japanese internment—debate ensued over the rights of citizen farm workers to have exclusive access to the farm labor market and thus to the right to organize and bargain with employers.²¹ While legally a program for the entire country, until its cessation in 1964 the Bracero Program was central to the maintenance and expansion of the agribusiness industry in the US Southwest (Mize 2006). Additionally, the importation of non-citizen, Mexican workers, in the estimation of farm worker activists, served as the perfect blockade to successful farm worker mobilization. Indeed from the 1940s to the 1960s, farm worker activists were wholly consumed with the existence of and quest to terminate the Bracero Program.

²¹ The Spanish word for arm is *brazo* thus forming the root of the term Bracero. Therefore, Bracero can be translated as “working arm” or more appropriately into English as “working hand.”

They would decry the practice of importing guest workers for its abuse of Mexican workers and the program's primary role in constricting the possibilities of creating a farm worker union. However, can the program be held responsible for the lack of a legitimate farm workers union?

A brief comparison of farm labor agitation in the time periods before and after the era of the Bracero Program provides some answers. In the 1930s, intense strike activity occurred in California agriculture illustrated in the preceding chapter. As for the post-Bracero era, there was a momentous lift in farm worker mobilization efforts that would conclude with the formation of the United Farm Workers of America in 1966. However, from 1942 to 1959, the trend of farm worker activism, which had taken flight in the 1930s came to a halt and seemingly lied dormant until the peak era of the 1960s. Majka and Majka (1982:146) detail the period's only significant farm worker strike when the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) organized action against the DiGiorgio Corporation in 1947, a company that "with its extensive financial empire and corporate ties, was a prime example of agribusiness"—and again in the 1960s would be the target of striking farm workers. Obviously, landowners were central actors within the agricultural industry and thus key to any labor strife and appeal for labor unionism. However, in the 1940s the state transitioned into a key, internal player.

The state altered the manner in which farm labor and capital would interact by acting as the "mediator" to which both groups would need to appeal: the former to ask for termination of the Bracero program and the latter to ensure that the program continue and that Japanese tenant farmers be imprisoned. However, the state was no neutral set of institutions as it drew in Mexican workers and interned Japanese families. In fact, the

state's treatment of and actions towards both groups is in accordance with the previous chapter's assertion of a racial hierarchy in California. The very fact that Japanese tenant farmers held a higher position on a racial hierarchy of the 1930s would not provide them with protective cover in the 1940s. The opposite was true. In accordance with their position nearer to Whites as Jung has described in his analysis of Hawaii's agricultural labor force (2006), the Japanese in California were deemed a greater threat as compared to other groups of color; all talk or perceptions of the Japanese being "good" or "reliable" were swept away by the distinct form of anti-Japanese racism. Meanwhile, Mexicans continued to be racialized as the accessible and appropriately equipped farm labor force.

THE STATE, RACE, AND FARM WORKERS

There has been debate over whether state theories should be built around "state-centered" [the autonomous entity] (Skocpol 1979, 1985) or "society-centered" [the state created from the social context] understandings of the state. George Steinmetz (1998: 17) writes that "state-centered" thinking "was successful partly because" it explained scenarios "in which state structures and policies failed to correspond to dominant class interests." That is, these theories propose that the state often possesses its own agenda.

As for analyses of the state and farm workers, they cannot afford to be exclusively adhered to either one of these two approaches to state theory. On one hand farm workers contend with what I argue is an oppressive, at times seemingly all-powerful state. While I take care to not overreach and characterize the state as all-powerful, in 1940s California the US state maintains ample power to contract and import cheap, Mexican labor while simultaneously relocating and imprisoning over 100,000 Japanese origin people from the West Coast into camps. It is no overreach to understand these state sanctioned and

managed programs as stunningly efficient and emblematic of oppressive and I would argue racist power.

Even then, Zatz (1993: 854) demonstrates how the working class—and I would add oppressed people of color—must bring their challenges to the state; they do so because the state is perceived as a “neutral ground on which interest groups fight it out.” And indeed, though often unsuccessful as their pleas fall on deaf ears, farm workers and organizers tried and continued to try in the 1940s and 1950s.

For example, historian Erasmo Gamboa shows that while Braceros and the farm working class as a whole may have been unable to alter their status as subjugated workers, they attempted to exert some amount of power—citizen and non-citizen alike. Gamboa’s (1990) social history indicates that Braceros protested their inferior status, mistreatment, and engaged in strike activity. Simply because the efforts were not “successful” in the conventional sense and did not spur on large-scale mobilization is not ample reason to term the farm working class a powerless lot. Indeed, as a Foucauldian analysis would contend (Foucault, 1990 [1978], even the oppressed have some reservoir of power from which they can draw.

Whatever modest level of power they held among their ranks, the state would eventually, though not in the 1940s, have to listen to workers of color. Even though the state would hear out farm workers in the 1960s and 1970s and their interaction with the state offers a compelling case for sociological analysis, state theorists have not taken much interest in the farm workers movement. Two books represent what appear to be the only complete monographs on state theory and farm workers: *Farm Workers*,

Agribusiness, and the State by Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka and *Inside the State* by Kitty Calavita.

Majka and Majka (1982) offer a well-developed study of California agriculture and the state, but offer little analysis of how the state became an internal player within the movement. The authors address how landowners “employed a succession of nonwhite minorities excluded from the predominantly white, urban-based labor union movement” (Ibid.: 5). However, they cursorily reason that the absence of a racially united farm workers movement was resultant of “rivalries and distrust among ethnic factions.” For Majka and Majka, the state seems to occupy three different historical roles in its dealings with farm labor and capital conflict: capitalist ally, mediator, and potential reformer. However, they sidestep the state’s role as a racist exploiter in and of itself.

In her study, Calavita (1992) focuses on the Bracero Program to draw out theoretical ideas on the internal workings of the state. Arguing that the program was (Calavita 1992: 1) “born and raised on administrative powers”—and not simply resultant of capitalists’ demands—Calavita demonstrates that the importation of Mexican agricultural workers cannot be entirely explained by a Marxist take on state theory such as that advanced by Majka and Majka. She urges an interpretation that accounts for the intra-state tension existent in the state’s managerial conduct of the Bracero Program. Thus, two interrelated points emerge from the Calavita analysis: the state is no monolith and thus contains competing agendas within it. While helpful to our understanding of the state and the Bracero era, Calavita’s monograph like Majka and Majka does not concern itself much, if at all, with race and its own causal relationship to the inequality that farm workers of color experienced. Again, as most scholarship on farm workers, they remain

concerned mostly with the economic realm or social movement dynamics that enabled success. Further, they do not envision the state with any racial connotations or exerting racist power over groups of color.

The dearth of literature on race, the state, and farm workers is no surprise. As expressed in the dissertation introduction, farm labor scholarship seldom addresses the racial politics of the farm workers movement. Further, Calavita and Majka & Majka briefly note Japanese internment as a state-managed project coterminous with the Bracero Program. Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, broader sociological theories on race and the state should be examined as they offer necessary insight.

Recently, David Theo Goldberg's (2002) work conceptually fuses both terms (race and the state) and sketches a comprehensive theoretical overview of the racial state. Goldberg (Ibid: 6) submits that the state is an entity produced out of the interconnectedness of state projects and state powers. Like Calavita, Goldberg alleges that the state cannot be reduced to a mere pawn of big capital. Further, he argues (Ibid: 110) that "racial states govern populations in explicitly racial terms." That governance over racial groups connotes a certain hierarchical position for each group. This is not accidental, but is a purposeful creation of inequality within society.

Goldberg illustrates (Ibid.: 102) how the racial state deals explicitly in the management of migration/immigration with an eye to labor supply and expense. Within this process of immigrant/worker management, the racial state operates in such a way that an interpretation of this process as being (Ibid: 101) "an ephiphenomenon" of capitalists' bidding or "conduit of capital" is shortsighted. For example, the Bracero Program is consignable to that category of state-managed procurement of labor that was indeed

beneficial to capitalists. But I will show that White farm operators, while pleased to attain cheap Mexican labor wished to manage labor attainment on their own—it is a misinterpretation to set capital and the state as co-conspirators. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the Japanese from the California agricultural labor force may have been beneficial to White capitalists, but the state’s overarching agenda was to remove a perceived threat to national security not to necessarily increase capital profit for White farm operators. Against such a seemingly impassable and oppressive structure, how are groups of color to counteract?

One short answer to the question is that at some places and times, groups of color are simply unable to countervail the state’s racist agenda. Even when possible, immigrant labor of color forms a “distinct category” (Sassen-Koob 1981) of labor contracted by core states in the “consolidation of the world economic system.” These workers’ powerlessness is rooted in their dependency on *both* their employers and the state. Therefore, to attain justice would mean to protest the oppression flowing from owners and the government—certainly this was the predicament in which Braceros found themselves. However, Braceros would also find that organized farm labor wanted nothing to do with them. Farm labor organizers time and again ascertained that they advocated for US citizen farm workers—they appealed *to the state to prevent capitalists* from exploiting citizen workers and thus distinguished their plight as being separate from Braceros. Thus, Braceros came to be recognized as a kind of anti-citizen.

Moreover, I submit that not only Braceros, but the wide range of farm workers—ranging from Filipinos to US born Mexicans to Braceros and undocumented Mexican workers—confronted what was an essentially White state though obviously not as a

united labor front. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986: 81) advance this conception of the racial state in writing that “the state from its very inception has been concerned with the politics of race...” and that the state’s primary objective in regards to racial minorities “was repression and exclusion.” Moreover, the state embarked upon a project of developing a “racial nomenclature”—much like Goldberg’s assertion that a racial governance of society ordered groups into a hierarchical scheme. That is, groups within society had to be defined and stationed within a classificatory system, which maintained racial privilege for some and disadvantage for others (also see Banton 1987).

Anthony W. Marx (1998) details the destructive outcomes for racial minorities when a state implements racist practices as an essentially White state. This informs the scholarship as it details how difficult it is for racial minorities to mobilize against racist systems rooted in state apparatuses. Marx contends that in South Africa, for example, Afrikaners and the English colonizers were drawn together under a White racial identity via a state (Ibid.: 95) “strategy of prioritizing the racial difference from blacks in order to submerge white ethnic difference.” Thus, White racial identity was constructed within South Africa for the express purpose of nation-building, which in turn would foment a nation founded not only on the explicit emphasis on Whiteness but on the exclusion of Blacks from what was essentially a national and racial identity.

THE STATE SUBTRACTS THE “ENEMY RACE” OUT OF THE FIELDS

As the US entered the war, Japanese farmers in California found themselves in great peril within the very country and industry, which they had been central to building. In January 1942 Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt took charge of the US Western Defense Command and “claimed authority over the ‘Japanese problem’” since “Californians did

expect bombing and a Japanese invasion” (Masumoto 1987:42) after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the Fresno county community of Sanger, the continuance of Japanese farm labor output was deemed the litmus test of their allegiance to the United States of America. It was as if Japanese farmers were required to literally work their way not to the full rights of equality and citizenship but to merely stave off being tagged enemies of the state. The local newspaper in Sanger informed the public that Japanese American farmers “should continue to till their land and demonstrate their loyalty. Defense command and the fourth army official have heard of reports of some Japanese (who) have plowed under crops” (cited from the *Sanger Herald* (n.d.) in Masumoto 1987:45).

Unscrupulous, predatory individuals in the town of Selma, a few miles south of Sanger, reportedly pressured Japanese residents to “pay at once all the unpaid balance of loans” (cited from the *Selma Enterprise* (n.d.) in Masumoto 1987:47). In her community study of Cortez in Merced County, historian Valerie J. Matsumoto (1993:89) explains that the mayhem of impending internment provided only a “brief time...for preparations.” Coupled along with the “uncertainty of their return,” many Japanese farmers “lost the leases for rented farmlands and were forced to dispose of homes and business.”

A post-war government study of the camps displays the central role that Japanese farmers and laborers occupied in the California agriculture industry. I will point out that these numbers are not California specific as Japanese origin people were relocated from other states. However, of the grand total of 111,170 internees in the various camps profiled in the study, 92,757 were taken from California. Table 3.1 displays the

prominent position that Japanese workers played in the West Coast agribusiness industry. The study (US Department of the Interior 1946) classifies the employment backgrounds of internees over the age of 14, which I will define as “adult internees,” who were imprisoned in 1942. Of these 88,731 “adult internees,” 25,674 individuals’ work backgrounds were catalogued under the term “Agricultural, Fishery, Forestry, & Kindred Occupations [AFFKO].”

Table 3.1 Japanese Internment and Its Impact on Pacific Coast Agriculture

Total Japanese Internees	111,170
Japanese Internees from California	92,757
Adult Internees (age 14 and over)	88,731
Adult Internees in Agricultural Occupations	22,722

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority. “Primary Occupational Classification as of 1942 by Sex and Nativity: Evacuees 14 Years Old and Over to WRA in 1942,” in *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), Table 22.

However, most of these individuals were most decidedly not in the fishery or forestry industries—the overwhelming amount of these workers labored in raising grain, animals, fruits, and vegetables or in managing farms. My own calculations indicate that 2,952 internees of the AFFKO classification indeed worked in areas outside of agriculture and most of this group—numbering 2,376—worked as “Gardeners and grounds keepers”—a particular occupational niche that many Japanese Americans held in Los Angeles (Tsuchida 1984). After excluding this number (2952) from the total number of workers in the AFFKO category, my final tally indicates that 20.4% of adult internees worked in agriculture and is illustrative of the disproportionate way in which California agriculture was affected by the WRA initiative to imprison Japanese origin people.

As for White growers, they were pleased as they could undertake efforts to block out the Japanese threat to White control over California agriculture. This desire to

exclude the Japanese was expressed from a lobbyist sent to Washington by the Shipper-Grower Association of Salinas (SGAS). The SGAS representative, Austin E. Anson, was blunt: “We might as well be honest. We do [want to relocate the Japanese]. It’s a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown men. They came into this valley to work, *and they stayed to take over*” (emphasis added, cited from the *Saturday Evening Post* in McWilliams 1945:127). As to California-wide agricultural associations, Majka and Majka (1982: 50) quickly note that “all of the white grower organizations supported [Japanese] evacuation, and the Western Growers Protective Association, the Associated Farmers, and California Farm Bureau.”

However, the US government also was concerned with agricultural production and keenly aware that production levels would be affected by removal of Japanese farmers. Historian Roger Daniels (1971: 48) writes that Agriculture Secretary Claude Wickard may have planned “a sort of large agricultural reservation in the central valleys of California on which the Japanese could ‘carry on their normal farming operations’ after being removed from all ‘strategic areas.’” Further, Wickard posed the idea that Mexicans could potentially serve as a substitute labor force for the Japanese in the agricultural industry.²²

If the Japanese were unofficially the enemies of White farm operators, they had no doubt been officially identified and racialized as enemies of the US state. As stated in the introductory remarks for the chapter, positioning at a higher level of the racial hierarchy is not to be mistaken for acceptance but rather wariness of the Japanese. Just as Mexicans were racialized as suitable for agricultural work, the Japanese were racialized

²² The single-quotation mark phrases are cited by Daniel (1971: 48) from a letter written by Wickard to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, January 16, 1942 [See footnote 9 for full archival information].

as a group whose allegiance fell with Imperial Japan. A White resident near the first camp to be set up in Manzanar, California ironically offered that the camps provided protection to Japanese people since subsequent to Pearl Harbor they were viewed as the enemy and there existed a “feeling, after what the Japs had done, that the Japs would probably have been beaten up if they hadn’t been in a place where they could be protected” (Garrett and Larson 1977: 101). Indeed, any semblance of partnership that had previously existed between Japanese tenant farmers and White landowners during the 1930s in holding back labor strikes dissolved in the wake of war. The state rendered its assessment of the Japanese as a group ultimately and innately steered by their racial disposition. General DeWitt held forth in a government report that while many Japanese in the US were “possessed of United States citizenship...the racial strains are undiluted...It, therefore, follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies of Japanese extraction, are at large today” (cited in Matsumoto 1993: 97).

FARM CAPITAL’S CHEAP MEXICAN LABOR

From 1942 to 1964, the practice of Bracero importation would stand in marked contradistinction to the manner in which Japanese workers were immediately removed from the California agribusiness industry. US Southwestern agribusiness would have its way in regards to having their Mexican labor supply at wage levels that enabled substantial farm capital profit. As the program began in April 1942, there would only be a trickle of workers with 4,203 Braceros entering the US. The ensuing war years yielded a stream of Bracero workers with 52,098 in 1943, 62,170 in 1944, and in the war’s final year, 49,454. From 1946 to 1948, the number of workers would substantially decrease with the average number of Bracero entrants in that range of years sitting at

approximately 29,000. However, in 1949, 107,000 contracted Mexican workers would enter the agricultural labor workforce but dip down to 67,500 in 1950. Thereafter, from 1951 to 1964 the number of admitted Braceros would average a whopping 301,196 per year (Calavita 1992: 218, Appendix B). These figures are laid out in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Bracero Entrants 1942-1945, 1949 & 1950 and
Yearly Averages 1946-1948 & 1951-1964

1942	4,203
1943	52,098
1944	62,170
1945	49,454
1946-1948	29,000 (yearly average)
1949	107,000
1950	67,500
1951-1964	301,196 (yearly average)

Source: Calavita 1992: 218, Appendix B

Though able to take advantage of such voluminous cheap, imported labor, growers expressed their concern that the guest worker program was state managed. In their organization publication in 1943, the Associated Farmers—an enemy of organized farm labor as made clear in the previous chapter—maintained that growers should not become beholden to “any labor supply that must be received through any government agency” and further argued that big capital should implement a labor retrieval system “which we can institute and administer (emphasis added)” (cited from the *Associated Farmer* in Gutiérrez 1995). A few years later in 1948, the Bureau of Employment Security took the reins of the program and “in turn utilized the services of the California Farm Placement Bureau, an agency with a history of close cooperation with growers” and seen as neglectful of farm laborers (Majka and Majka 1982: 143).

“BEST SUITED TO THIS WORK:” THE STATE ADDS MEXICAN WORKERS

There had been a historically rooted perception that domestic workers—seemingly even Mexican origin citizen workers—were of little use and less value as compared to Braceros within California agriculture. In regards to domestic workers in general, President Theodore Roosevelt’s Country Life Commission, in 1909, offered that “the general testimony” about American workers ascribed them as “less efficient and less reliable than much of the foreign labor” (cited in President Truman’s Commission on Migratory Labor 1951:19). In 1950, President Truman’s Commission on Migratory Labor would find this sort of statement echoed by interviewed employers; however, this “reliable foreign labor” was now found among Mexicans. Indeed, Mexican labor, as demonstrated during the 1930s, fit the bill. One farmer in California, arguing for usage of the Bracero labor force, contended that “the Mexican national is by all standards the best suited to this work. By temperament and aptitude, he seems especially adapted to farm employment” (Ibid.:20). Indeed, since 1910, Mexicans had become cemented as the premier type of worker that employers desired to carry out farm labor. Thus, the importation of Mexican labor beginning in the 1940s was not the introduction of Mexican workers into California agriculture as the most desirable labor. However, it did signal the emergence of a state-managed labor procurement process of workers from Mexico.

Even then, employers attempted to exert as much control as possible over this procurement process and carried out detailed examinations of Mexican workers who they viewed as *laborstock* rather than actual human beings. Ernesto Galarza, in a 1956 account for the Joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee, reported that Mexican workers would initially appear at recruiter stations in Mexico in their efforts to

find work north of the border. Pito Perez, one worker who was called up for a job, was “led into a large room” at the station “where he is given his first cursory examination. A man shakes his hand to test his grip and check his callouses. He is patted on the back. The gesture is friendly and just firm enough to judge his shoulder muscles” (cited in Galarza 1956:3).

These “especially adapted” workers eked out a miserable existence cordoned off in labor camps where Braceros were subjected to food poisoning, denied medical care, and lacked an ample supply of toilets.²³ It would be insult to argue that the level of humiliation and bigotry, which Braceros experienced in being forced to live in camps, is approximate to what Japanese families underwent subsequent to removal by the WRA. However, I wish to point out the unique yet similar ways in which both groups were cordoned off: one group—the Japanese—extracted from the agricultural labor market that 20.4% of the adults built up and labored within while the other group—Mexicans—were contracted, transported into the US Southwest, and placed in labor camps to do work at a cheap rate.

Besides their substandard living environs, both groups held in common a reified status as *anti-citizens* (Roediger 1991: 57): the Braceros as anti-citizens ineligible for labor unionism and Japanese origin people as anti-citizens ineligible to literally walk freely within the nation. Indeed to be an anti-citizen does not infer absence from the nation-state space. Rather, it points to how the subjugated group is indeed present within the nation and essential for labor or as an object of degradation. Though David Roediger’s *Wages of Whiteness* draws up the concept of anti-citizenry to depict the plight

²³ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, AWOOC Organizer Newsletter, September 21, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 4).

of African Americans in confrontation with White racism, the term is useful in comprehension of Asian and Mexican subjugation in California as well. Moreover, the lack of citizenship status or the second-class variety (in the case of the Japanese) reflected a specific racial and class position in California agribusiness. The consignment to anti-citizen status was granted legitimacy by other institutions within the California agricultural sector—most significant was the reception of Braceros by farm labor organizers.

ORGANIZED FARM LABOR AND BRACEROS

Chapter two demonstrated how Filipino workers suffered exclusion from mainstream organized labor in slight favor of Mexican workers. However, in the 1940s and onward, Braceros, though they were Mexicans, would not receive much in the way of acceptance by farm labor organizing efforts. They were often deemed within the farm workers movement as a group unworthy of labor union membership. Braceros labored under the control exerted upon them from three sources: the state in its management of the program, the exploitative conditions to which landowners subjected them, and in the orchestration of their migration from Mexico to a US Southwest worksite by intermediaries. For example, Stephen H. Sosnick (1978: 389) relays how middlemen organizations such as labor bureaus and farm labor associations—many formed as the Bracero program took flight after World War Two—“functioned as full-service labor contractors.” Put simply, no one seemed to allow the Braceros out of their sight. As a consequence of being both a foreign workforce and an overtly managed labor force at that, Braceros would need to tread carefully if they were to engage in farm labor strikes.

Even so, Braceros engaged in labor agitation and, at times, garnered concessions from employers. In fact, when Braceros did so, the fledgling AWOC lauded the striking workers from Mexico:

Mexican nationals are beginning to demand their rights, by means of wild-cat strikes, appeals to Mexican government representatives in Sacramento and Washington, and demands that growers and contractors recognize AWOC as their representative.²⁴

The same newsletter issue also noted that some Braceros garnered a wage raise as a result of strike activity: an increase from 14 cents to 18 cents per box for picking tomatoes. However, simply because they were applauded by AWOC did not infer acceptance by organized farm labor. Far from it, in fact, as farm labor organizers categorized Braceros as representative of things antithetical to American citizenship, culture, and identity.

As for farm labor organizers, opposition to the Bracero program required appeals for the program's termination to three audiences: the US state, farm capital, and sometimes the Mexican state. For example, farm labor activist Ernesto Galarza not only posted his grievances to the US government but also journeyed to Mexico City to plead his case to Mexican governmental leaders.²⁵ One audience, which was not of concern to Galarza and other farm labor organizers, were Braceros themselves.

While farm worker activists acknowledged the dehumanizing and downright racist treatment that Mexican guest workers underwent, organizers made it clear that these new workers should not be granted access to neither the agricultural labor market nor to farm labor unionism. Organizers expressed feelings of ambivalence, sympathy, and contradiction about the presence of imported Mexican labor. In some moments, they

²⁴ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, AWOC Organizer Newsletter, September 21, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 4).

²⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, "Imperial Labor Appeal Carried to Mexico City," June 1, 1951, p. 23.

maligned workers from Mexico and in other moments, they expressed a desire, though made no overt efforts, to unionize these laborers.

Galarza argued vehemently on behalf of farm worker activists that the Bracero Program be terminated and reasoned that Braceros were the absolute impediment to farm labor progress. He authored one report written in “the nature of a brief on behalf of the present system of farm [sic] labor market control” and maintained that all Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) efforts even as late as 1959 “should be to break the control of the [sic] corporation farm interests on the bracero program, which is now the keystone [sic] of the California farm labor market.”²⁶ Galarza alleged that in 1951 Braceros were the primary reason that an NFLU-sanctioned strike could not take hold in the Imperial Valley.²⁷ Thus, Galarza asserted that the Bracero Program should be of great concern to farm worker organizers. Braceros not only usurped the rightful place of citizen workers in the labor market, they served to exclude citizen workers from full legitimacy as unionized laborers.

FARM LABOR UNIONS FOR CITIZEN WORKERS ONLY

Braceros were informed that they would and could not ever be associated with farm labor organizations and that message emanated not only from farm labor organizers. One worker, Alvino, said that “they [growers and/or the state] are trying to force us to accept contracts here in this valley where the pay is low...It looks like we will be forced to accept the Imperial Valley or Yuma.”²⁸ Another Bracero, Odeoclato, provided his own

²⁶ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, Memorandum for Franz Daniel from Ernesto Galarza, November 3, 1959, (Box 4, Folder 6).

²⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, “Imperial Labor Appeal Carried to Mexico City,” June 1, 1951, p. 23.

²⁸ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement by Henry P. Anderson for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research (p. 12), AWOC Research Paper #2, Paper Date: June 15, 1961, Interview Date: May 19, 1958, (Box 12, Folder 16).

account of maltreatment and subjection to anti-labor tirades: “Our foreman was very mean, always swearing at us and bawling us out...Anybody that complained was called a striker and shipped back to Mexico.”²⁹

Though acknowledging their severe mistreatment, Galarza reiterated the designation of Braceros as ineligible for labor unionism. Galarza (1956:76) maintained that Braceros were “a group apart from the organized labor movement of the United States.” While Mexican guest workers and their labor remained essential to US Southwestern agribusiness, Galarza contended, “from an organizational point of view, the thousands of Mexican farm workers *do not exist*. This fact only adds to the bracero’s real isolation” [emphasis added]. Indeed, Galarza furthered along that isolation by placing labor unionism out of reach for a group of workers that had formulated their own strike actions. This was a precarious position which Braceros occupied as they faced the anti-labor disposition of their employers and the lack of a “labor home” from which they could mobilize.

Therefore, in line with strategy that advocated only for citizen farm workers against big capital via appeals to the state, AWOC exhorted its membership to let President Kennedy “know that *we domestic* farm workers do still exist, in spite of the tremendous harm done by the bracero system. [emphasis added]”³⁰ While the notion of citizenship and “belonging” factored into the racist exclusion of workers as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the strike waves of the 1930s emphasized more so race and class rather than citizenship. However, in the age of the Bracero, AWOC’s statement that is

²⁹ Ibid.: Interview Date: May 27, 1958.

³⁰ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, AWOC Organizer Newsletter, September 21, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 4).

cited above indicates a shift within the movement and that in confrontation with the Bracero Program, farm workers organizers asserted their right to farm jobs since their constituency was of the citizenry, legally at the very least.

While the tactic and argument strategy seems sturdy, the movement's problem was that Braceros—"foreign labor"—had come to be defined as the most desirable type of labor. The cruelly ironic reality dictated that even if Mexican American workers were to be perceived and allowed bona fide US citizen identity, they were not constructed as the most ideal workers anyway. Organizers asserted that US citizenship entitled workers to labor unionism. However, citizen farm workers operated within a labor market that prized foreign, imported labor over domestic laborers and thus seemed to make the assertion of citizenship a moot point—to employers at least.

FILIPINO WORKERS AND THE BRACERO PROGRAM

While the Japanese were interned and state-contracted Mexican workers flooded the California agricultural labor market, Filipinos persisted in their own organizational efforts. In Stockton, they organized the Filipino Agricultural Laborer's Association (FALA) in March 1939. The very next month, FALA declared a strike in the asparagus crops and "within thirty six hours the million dollar asparagus industry capitulated. There was a caucus among the farmers. They gave up. And the asparagus cutters won the strike" (from Inosanto 1974, cited in Voices 1984:9).³¹ A few years later, as war broke out in the Pacific, Filipino workers were granted citizenship and engaged in military combat. According to Schwartz (1945: 100), FALA actively engaged in interracial collective efforts with "independent unions of Mexican and Japanese

³¹ A note on the source labeled "Voices" in the text: This oral history collection does not have numbered pages. Thus, I did my own page count and reckon that the quote I am using from Inosanto is located on what would be page 9 in "Voices."

workers.” Further, like Inosanto cited above, Schwartz contends that the onset of the war removed several Filipino from the agricultural labor market.

However, primary sources indicate that indeed some Filipinos remained employed as agricultural laborers after the war. Filipino workers voiced their disapproval of the program’s ramifications and recognized Braceros as invaders upon their turf, literally in the fields, and figuratively as domestic workers. One Filipino worker from Stockton reported the unfair labor market system, which they encountered: “Baltini [a grower outside of Stockton] got in a crew of Mexican Nationals. Our pay started going down. He [Baltini] said ‘If you don’t like it, I got somebody who will be happy to do it.’ So we left.” Braceros were also held responsible for working a crop that was often regarded as the domain of Filipino farm workers: asparagus. Lloyd H. Fisher (1953: 7) observed that a “Filipino agricultural worker is very likely to be a professional harvest hand” as opposed to Mexican workers who were more likely to “regard agricultural employment as a temporary expedient.” The same Filipino worker, perhaps noting the intrusion on his expert status and labor market niche as an asparagus worker, complained that “We used to be able to make \$1,200 or \$1,300 during the asparagus season...Since the braceros came in, we haven’t been able to make more than about \$800 a season.”³²

IMPEDIMENTS TO ASSIMILATION

Farm worker advocates walked a tightrope in their stern opposition to the Bracero Program between that of siding with citizen workers and simultaneously ascertaining that they did not appear to be Bracero bashers. AWOC spoke to all the sensitive points of the Bracero Program by citing the exploitation of Braceros, the harm the program does to

³² Reuther Library, UFW—Central File Papers, U.S. Department of Labor Hearings, Sacramento, February 21, 1962, (Box 12, Folder 11).

domestic workers, and the particularly difficult position in which it places Mexican American workers.³³ In congressional testimony, AWOC reported the feelings of a “Mexican American leader in Los Angeles,” who stated that “Naturally, we feel sorry for the braceros...After all, our own parents were in the pretty much in the same position...But look at what the program is doing to us.”³⁴ Therefore, there was a strict partition, which the farm worker organizers deployed, along lines of nationality: the flow of Mexican workers was a trespass on Mexican American identity, image, and opportunity.

Further, AWOC would construct an argument that posed Bracero workers as a threat to the assimilation process for Mexican descent workers referring to the imported workers as “the continual infusion of the unassimilable...by an act of Congress.”³⁵ Significantly, AWOC made a concerted effort to portray Mexican American workers as workers headed toward assimilation—an odd portrayal that refused to take into account histories of racism and discrimination that Mexican workers had been subjected to in the US Southwest (Barrera 1979, Camarillo 1979). AWOC’s logic dictated that Braceros not only “took” jobs from Mexican American workers, but also were impediments to what would seemingly be a naturally occurring assimilation process. For example, they maintained that Braceros posed “an almost overwhelming burden upon the resident Spanish-speaking in their efforts to become full Americans rather than hyphenated Americans.”³⁶ They put forth this type of argument within a larger framework of what

³³ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, AWOC Research Paper #2, June 15, 1961, p.5, (Box 12, Folder 16).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, AWOC Research Paper #2, June 15, 1961, p. 11, (Box 12, Folder 16).

the U.S. and “America” should represent in the world. They argued that most Americans would “agree that foreign contract labor systems...are destructive of our best national ideas and aspirations” and “antithetical to immigration policies which have characterized the [U.S.A.] since the revolutionary epoch.”³⁷

ALTERNATE LABOR RESERVOIRS: JAPANESE GUEST WORKERS

However, Mexican workers were not the only foreign workers who were deemed a threat to the ability of citizen farm workers to attain farm labor jobs. Since organized farm labor protested the guest workers program, farm operators with the help of the state were active in making certain they could gather reliably cheap labor from other nations. Indeed, Mexico simply offered the most prominent source of foreign agricultural labor to the US but did not constitute the sole source.

Ernesto Galarza and the NFLU also expressed concern to the possible importation of additional workers into California via a Japanese guest worker program. AWOOC Director Smith responded to other perceived threats by Asian guest worker programs when he “fired off letters” of protest to the Secretary of Labor in response to suggestions that “45,000 Filipino Nationals” would be brought in to carry out agricultural work. The Secretary’s response indicates the suggestion of importing Filipino workers was an absurd idea.³⁸

However, growers had indeed managed to attain Japanese guest workers. In 1957, proposals to increase the number of Japanese guest workers from a miniscule number of 786 to an astonishing 1,000,000 had been submitted.³⁹ Ernesto Galarza was

³⁷ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, p. 10, AWOOC Research Paper #2, June 15, 1961, (Box 12, Folder 16).

³⁸ Green Library, Ernesto Galarza Papers, The AWOOC Organizer, January 6, 1960, (Box 4, Folder 3).

³⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, “Conflicting Views Given on Imported Farm Labor,” May 1, 1957, p. 23.

dispatched and stepped into the fray. Galarza, along with John F. Henning of the California State Federation of Labor, contended that Japanese guest workers program formed part of a “scheme under which both American and Japanese workers are abused for employer profit.”—the identical anti-guest worker tactic utilized in opposition to the Bracero Program.⁴⁰

Interestingly, one leader of the conservative Japanese American Citizens League argued that Japanese farm workers’ experiences in the US were crucial. This same individual, Frank Masaoka—who had also actively spoken out against Japanese Americans who protested their imprisonment in the internment camps—insisted that by writing “letters” back home to Japan, Japanese guest workers had put a stop to electoral victories by the Communist Party in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima.⁴¹ Seemingly, the perception of the Japanese mutated from enemy race to vanquished enemy that could be “Americanized.”

Galarza (1964: 247) further contended that on account of the protests over the Bracero Program and grower distrust of the state, growers were “wise to keep within reach alternative sources from which the labor pool could be replenished.” In setting up the Japanese guest worker program, the Japanese Consul in San Francisco stated that workers from Japan had “an opportunity to participate in the American way of life and to learn the latest technical methods in American agriculture” (cited in Galarza 1964: 248 from *Interim report* from the Consul General of Japan [San Francisco]).

Growers had thus found an alternative labor source other than citizen workers or Braceros that also fulfilled the mission of the US state: to form a productive relationship

⁴⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, “Recruiting of Japanese Farm Workers Assailed,” April 24, 1957, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Los Angeles Times*, “Conflicting Views Given on Imported Farm Labor,” May 1, 1957, p. 23.

with Japan. An Associated Farmer official informed the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the labor deal with Japan was “more or less an educational deal” (cited in Galarza 1964: 249) for Japanese workers. Another observer proclaimed to the same newspaper that the Japanese workers are “fundamentally clean and not as apt to get drunk” when compared to Braceros (cited in Galarza 1964: 248).

CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE EXPANSION AND THE BRACEROS

While farm worker organizers bemoaned the existence of the Bracero system and the state exerted its power in management of the program, growers had also made certain to implement contingency plans for their labor supply. However, by the time of the Japanese guest workers program’s creation, the war had long been over. Indeed, AWOC argued that Bracero labor had allowed growers “from California and the Southwest” to expand the agribusiness industry—it was no longer a case of simply keeping head above water during a war. AWOC asserted that in the 1950s as the Bracero Program underwent phenomenal growth that “production of strawberries” in Monterey County, California “increased...from 541 to 5,124 acres” and “tomatoes in San Joaquin County, Calif., more than doubled; from 337,000 to 796,500 tons.”⁴² Further, sociologist Ronlad L. Mize (2006) has asserted that Bracero labor was integral to the massive growth of US Southwestern agribusiness.

Indeed, growers were accustomed to an expected delivery of workers on some type of schedule for California growers—both large and small—so that tremendous production numbers could be sustained. In the process of labor procurement, the state could act as friend or foe. Member farmers of the San Joaquin Farm Production

⁴² Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, AWOC Research Paper #2, June 15, 1961 p. 10, (Box 12, Folder 16).

Association received a plea from the association, because AWOC had started to picket at the Podesto Ranch in nearby Bellota. Consequently, cherries were not being picked at the ranch as the California Department of Employment determined that the picket action constituted a bona fide labor dispute. Thus, “no local or domestic workers can be referred by the Farm Labor Offices and it also means that Podesto Farms cannot use Mexican Nationals [Braceros]” (my insertion).⁴³ The letter states that cherry growers were in dire straits and would pay scab workers \$1.10 per bucket and \$1.75 per day for food and shelter for picking the cherries “immediately (today) or our member will have a complete crop loss.”⁴⁴

These associations of farmers, such as the San Joaquin group, acted to maintain some kind of farm capital-managed procurement of labor. Farmer associations provided for their members “centralized pools of braceros, from which anyone, large or small, might draw his captive workers by picking them up in the morning and returning them at night.” AWOC advanced an economic theory of capital and the labor supply, which posited that increased production led to a need for more labor (thus more Braceros or any other kind of guest worker), cheaper products (perhaps good for the consumer but offered lower profit margins), and in turn, necessitated more production to maintain high levels of income.⁴⁵ Further, organized labor continually asserted that there was a grooved-in “adverse effect” that carved out a position in the farm labor market exclusively for

⁴³ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, letter from San Joaquin Farm Production Association to association members, May 25, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 14).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, AWOC Research Paper #2, June 15, 1961, p. 10, (Box 12, Folder 16).

Braceros and caused wages to drop to an unacceptable level for domestic workers.⁴⁶

AWOC asserted that “after meeting his personal expenses and the living expenses of his family, [a Bracero] has only \$5.48” per week in net income which leaves a Bracero workers “\$4.50 short of requirement to meet his debts.”⁴⁷ Indeed, both farm labor and the growers turned to the state to hopefully, for the former, terminate the program, and for the latter, import Mexican labor.

APPEALS TO THE STATE

The resentment against Braceros emanated not only from Filipino and Mexican farm labor but also from White workers who also desired to be unionized. One white worker lamented “that peach thinning wages were better before the Nationals arrived.”⁴⁸ In response to this quip, Louis Krainock, AWOC’s Director of Public Information, responded by telling the worker that the Braceros “are having their usual depressing effect on wages.”⁴⁹ Another White worker in the southern city of Blythe complained to AWOC Director Norman Smith that “the Nationals have [the jobs] all sewed up and very few [white and/or American workers] get in there.”⁵⁰ The worker went on to decry the low wages and spare work available to him.

J.H. Scott, a white worker in Petaluma informed Director Smith of the ways in which certain crops were assigned to certain racial groups:

⁴⁶ AWOC conducted two in-depth studies in 1959 and 1960 on the “adverse effect” of the Bracero Program. Green Library, Ernesto Galarza Papers, A Case Study in “Adverse Effect,” October 5, 1959, (Box 4, Folder 9) and Another Case Study in Adverse Effect, January 5, 1960, (Box 4, Folder 10).

⁴⁷ Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Central Files, Statement for the Subcommittee on General Legislation and Agricultural Research, p. 3, (Box 12, Folder 16).

⁴⁸ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, letter to Louis Krainock from Ella Satterfield, May 19, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 14).

⁴⁹ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, letter to Ella Satterfield from Louis Krainock, May 23, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 14).

⁵⁰ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, letter to Norman Smith from S. Brown, February 3, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 4).

Today, my family and I went out to a bean field where they had been picking for three days. At least, the Mexican Nationals had been picking. I asked to go to work and I was turned down, flat. I was told if I wanted to work I could go to another field where the white workers were being hired.⁵¹

Consequently, Mr. Scott posted a complaint with the Farm Labor Office, which had to send down two individuals to secure work for the family. However, Mr. Scott stated that not only were farm operators withholding employment from him, but was so was the state-mandated guest worker program, which put Mexican workers in what he deemed was his rightful place.

Eventually, the Bracero Program would come to its termination point in 1964. Indeed, farm capital in California had profited handsomely. However, the imprint on farm labor would be such that through the 1960s and later, the farm labor movement, particularly in its appeals to the state, would not advocate for non-citizen workers—particularly the undocumented—which were overwhelmingly from Mexico.

CONCLUSION: THE FORMATION OF FARM LABOR'S ANTI-IMMIGRANT DISCOURSE

Even after the program was terminated, opposition to the Bracero Program had set into place an anti-immigrant discourse within the farm workers movement. In creating and managing the program, hearing protestations to the program, and listening to the desires of farm capital for cheap labor, the state moved into a central and internal role within the capital, labor, and racial conflicts of California agriculture. In developing a strategic appeal to the state, farm labor organizers would utilize this anti-immigrant discourse to delineate Mexican workers as problematic for assimilation, national worker unity, and union success. Cesar Chavez argued that the program persisted with the influx of undocumented workers from Mexico:

⁵¹ Reuther Library, AWOOC Papers, letter to Norman Smith from J.H. Scott, September 7, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 9).

Congress has but scotched the snake, not killed it. The [Bracero] Program lives on in the annual parade of thousands of illegals and green carders across the United States-Mexico [sic] border to work in our fields...and probably never have had, any bona fide intention of making the United States of America their permanent home.⁵²

Therefore, Chavez judged that undocumented workers had inherited the position of Braceros as trespassers upon the national identification of Mexican descent workers in the US. One study offers (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002: 36) that the “number of braceros remained insufficient to meet the demand emanating from the fields” and thus growers “increasingly took matters into their own hands by recruiting undocumented workers.” Thus, subsequent to the war, labor organizers contended with a mixed set of laborers who were deemed unfit for labor union membership: documented Braceros and unauthorized workers. However, the precarious position of Braceros demonstrates that authorized status *did not* confer enough legitimacy on legal workers so that they could be recognized as organizable. With mention of “green carders,” Chavez assails the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965 as counterproductive to labor organization efforts. Part and parcel of the anti-Bracero discourse was to separate out Mexican American workers as assimilable people into the US nation while Braceros simply could not be. Louis Krainock also positioned Braceros into this position as anti-citizens when he asked one farm labor ally rhetorically, “Do Nationals—or can Nationals—support local schools, clubs, churches, civic groups, the whole community? Of course not. He can’t because he is not a real member of the community.”⁵³

As the Bracero Program drew to a close, the *Los Angeles Times* editorialized the pros and cons of the program’s demise. In alignment with organized farm labor logic and

⁵² Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Information and Research, Statement by Cesar Chavez Before the Subcommittee on Labor, April 16, 1969, (Box 17, Folder 7).

⁵³ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, letter from Louis Krainock to Lillian Ransome, February 22, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 4).

discourse, the paper argued that more jobs for domestic workers were available as a result of banishing workers from Mexico. As a result, this meant an infusion of revenue for the country (as opposed to Braceros remitting money to their families in Mexico) and especially the state of California.⁵⁴ However, the battle to end the program went to the bitter end. In December 1964, only weeks before the program's conclusion, C. Al Green, appointed Director of AWOC in January 1962, testified in San Francisco against the possible usage of Public Law 414, a potential successor to the guest worker statute, by the Department of Labor to continue the importation of workers into the country. Green contended "growers have used the excuse that an adequate number of US workers is not available to do work." Further, Green cited seven cases in which he alleged that growers not only had "cheap, captive" labor in Braceros but a reservoir of strikebreakers as well. Green concluded by stating that "domestic farm workers will do stoop labor when the price is right."⁵⁵

It is not surprising that, even in its final days in 1964, organized labor would be aggressive in its denouncement of the Bracero Program. An AWOC report in 1959 held that since 1951, the guest worker program had always been renewed in the dying hours of a Congressional legislative session. Thus, AWOC was wary of what it referred to as "Congressional intent."⁵⁶ By 1959, with the formation of AWOC, farm worker activists seized an opportunity to challenge the existence of the Bracero Program. Previous to the 1950s, there had been little opportunity or an able farm labor organization that could

⁵⁴ "The Year the Braceros Departed" *Los Angeles Times* December 3, 1965, pg. A4.

⁵⁵ Reuther Library, AWOC Papers, Testimony by C. Al Green Before a Hearing of the U.S. Department of Labor, December 7, 1964, (Box 7, Folder 17).

⁵⁶ Green Library, Ernesto Galarza Papers, AWOC Paper: A Case Study in "Adverse Effect," October 5, 1959, (Box 4, Folder 9).

challenge, not only growers, but also the state's efforts to continue the program. Perhaps their conclusion was that the anti-immigrant discourse had worked effectively.

For farm worker organizers, another bit of their logic informed them that the Bracero Program represented evidence that the state simply carried out farm operators' bidding. For example, the previously cited testimony of C. Al Green in 1964 cites the power of landowners and the Bracero program as an initiative that created big profits for landowners. Three years earlier in 1961, there had been strikes in the Imperial Valley, a vast area on the border where sizable lettuce crops were grown. AWOC hoped to use the strikes *not to create a labor deal* but to force growers to desist from utilizing Bracero labor.⁵⁷ The movement against Braceros was so absolutely central to farm labor initiatives that they did little actual mobilization of farm workers.

While locating the problem as being represented by landowners only, farm worker organizations never estimated that the state possessed its own agenda as a labor importer. The state had been quite influential in its continual renewal of the program and in some instances by expressing a disinterest and maintaining a distance from activists. Dolores Huerta, working around the same time period for the NFWA, construed the continuance of the Bracero Program as an indicator that no organizational body or activists were moving against the program. She asserted that "On PL [Public Law] 78, the situation was that exactly which I found in May—no one is working for its defeat that's [sic] why it passed the Senate. I don't know what the Union is doing, nothing as usual, I guess."⁵⁸ Additionally, Huerta noted that efforts needed to be taken from *within* the state. Huerta

⁵⁷ "Lettuce Farm Strike Part of Deliberate Union Plan" *Los Angeles Times* January 23, 1961, pg. B1.

⁵⁸ Reuther Library, NFWA Papers, letter from Dolores Huerta to Cesar Chavez, n.d., (Box 2, Folder 12) While this letter has no date, Huerta makes reference to her need for new car license plates for 1963, so the letter is written sometime after the inception of the NFWA in September 1962 and before the new year began.

lists several Congressmen from throughout California, who needed to be contacted and cajoled into voting out the program.

In actuality, much labor organization activity had been focused on ending the importation of Mexican workers if not most farm labor organizing energy since the 1940s. Perhaps Huerta was referring to the NFWA specifically, but the AWOC had made the program its reason for being. The lettuce strikes in the Imperial Valley, which Jenkins (1985) refers to as a “fiasco” did achieve some success in that it set into motion a ruling by the Department of Labor to disallow Bracero labor from growers if domestic workers were available. However, the central point here is that indeed labor unions were involved in dislodging the foreign labor program and that those appeals were couched within an argument that big capital utilized the cheap labor to their own advantage. However, tremendous power over the program resided in the state. In fact, in the Imperial Valley, while AWOC picketers rallied against Braceros in the fields, the Department of Labor saw to it that the lettuce crops were harvested. The state, and not the growers, made certain that the produce made it to market.

Therefore, farm worker activists were consumed with appeals to the state in order to end the oppression, which they argued emanated from agribusiness and the dominant forces of hungry capitalism. However, the state resided in its position as a power monger—it had interests in having the crops harvested, in having profits maintained or increased, and having an available labor supply. Thus, capital and the state may have had intertwined agendas, similar interests, but a conclusion that they operated in tandem, *always and purposefully*, is flawed.

It was on the point of wages that labor unions, growers, and the state battled it out. The federal government saw to it that there was some minimum wage for Braceros. The wage varied from state to state and in California the floor rate of pay for Braceros was standardized at \$1 as late as 1962.⁵⁹ However, the argument from US citizen workers was that these wages could not sustain their families as compared to single male Braceros from Mexico, who were provided room and board, and sent their wages back home. Thus, US farm workers and farm worker organizations repeatedly concluded that workers from Mexico, even after the Bracero Program's conclusion, incurred serious harm on the creation of a union as they simultaneously exerted a downward pull on wage rates.

⁵⁹ Reuther Library, AWOOC Papers, U.S. Department of Labor—Bureau of Employment Security Letter No. 1281, March 29, 1962, (Box 8, Folder 14). The lowest rates of pay for Braceros were in Arkansas at 60 cents per hour and Texas at 70 cents per hour.

CHAPTER 4: AN INEVITABLE COALITION? THE MERGER OF TWO PEOPLES AND TWO UNIONS IN THE FARMWORKERS MOVEMENT

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Since the 1930s and subsequent to World War Two, Filipino and Mexican farm workers had struggled to create viable labor unions that would allow them to negotiate with powerful landowners who employed them. For most of this history, they met with little success. In the 1930s, farm workers of color were positioned on specific points of a racial hierarchy as discussed and analyzed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 detailed how during and after World War Two, energies were directed at dismantling the newly created Bracero Program while Japanese Americans were whisked away to internment camps in 1942. Thereafter, farm worker organizers confronted the state and powerful growers in their efforts to assemble a farm workers labor union.

In the Bracero era of the farm labor struggle, the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations) funded Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) was formed in 1959. In 1962, Cesar Chavez founded a parallel farm workers organization, the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). AWOC's Filipino contingent was crucial to farm worker mobilization in the 1960s and Cesar Chavez's Mexican dominated NFWA would emerge as a competitor with AWOC in efforts to forge farm labor unionism.

In 1966, Filipinos and Mexicans would merge their respective labor unions, AWOC and the NFWA, into one interracial union and social movement organization. This chapter demonstrates how and why Filipino and Mexican workers were drawn together against the historical backdrop of racial division within the California agriculture labor force.

I utilize primary source material drawn from the UFW and farm worker organizer archival holdings to demonstrate how internal factors to the movement were essential to the merger, which would produce landmark concessions in 1970. The chapter provides a fresh analysis that complements the numerous studies on farm workers that concentrate on external factors' role in the production of social movement success.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2005, the *Seattle Times* reported that 170 workers from Thailand had entered the US on H-2A visas and would work cherry and apple harvests in the Yakima Valley of Washington State. A California-based farm labor contractor was responsible for obtaining the workers and expected to procure the labor of over 1,000 workers from Thailand throughout the rest of the year. Though I have no far-reaching evidence that Thai workers are the largest and latest Asian addition to the agricultural labor market on the West Coast, a quick look at the UFW website allows viewers to read a portion of the website contents in the Thai language. At the very least, the website content paired with the Seattle report indicates that Thai workers' presence is acknowledged within the contemporary Pacific coast farm labor market. The Seattle newspaper interviewed the UFW's regional director for Washington who argued that the importation of Thai workers was intended to displace Latino farm laborers. The director referred to this action as the playing of "a subtle race card...which is the legacy of agriculture. We have a similar trajectory here. As Mexican workers become more organized, one of the responses is to replace them with workers from Thailand."⁶⁰

But in fact, as I have argued throughout the dissertation, the racial politics for Asian and Mexican origin farm laborers within the history of California agriculture has

⁶⁰ *Seattle Times*, New State Import: Thai Farmworkers, February 20, 2005.

hardly been a “subtle” affair. The UFW official poses the importation of foreign, non-White labor as groups sequentially replacing each other as objects of capitalist exploitation. Further, by simply stating that Thai workers are to replace more “organizable” Mexican workers infers that Thai immigrant workers are somehow less desirous of farm labor unionism. Are both groups, Asian origin and Mexican origin farm workers, destined to be a racially split labor force? While this was the case for most of California history, this chapter demonstrates how at one point and time Filipino and Mexican workers overcame such divisions to form a racially united labor front in California.

From the 1930s until 1959, California labor organizers were stifled in their efforts to create labor movement success for farm workers. Unions such as the CAIWU (Cannery and Agricultural Industrial Workers Union) and the UCAPAWA (United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America) drew farm workers together in the 1930s. Those efforts were squelched because of deeply entrenched White racism, which subjected various racial groups in California—Filipino, Japanese, and Mexican—to “qualitatively different racisms” (Jung 1999, 2002, & 2003).

Throughout the era of Japanese internment and Braceros, there were no significant farm labor victories. In 1942, California growers were provided cheap labor at a steady rate with the implementation of the Bracero Program. As a result, through the 1940s and 1950s, the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) and then AWOC promoted the cause of field laborers by asserting their opposition to the Bracero Program, but with little to show for their work (Calavita 1992). Indeed, the intense repression of the 1930s

coupled with the Bracero Program's inception in the 1940s did much to place farm worker mobilization efforts in a state of "social movement abeyance" (Taylor 1989).

"PEOPLE WHO KNOW A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT FARM LABOR"

By 1959, the NFLU was out of the picture and farm worker activists were in a directionless state. How could they succeed against a historical legacy of repressive racism, failed strikes and meager concessions? In a letter to Ernesto Galarza in 1961, Henry Pope Anderson wrote of his desire

to create an organization which actually represents some citizens of the state of California; which behaves responsibly with integrity, and organizational savvy; and which is run by people who know a little something about farm labor.⁶¹

Anderson penned his letter two years after the formation of AWOC in 1959 and a year prior to the formation of the NFWA. He worked for AWOC as chairperson of the union's Northern California Area Council and was ever mindful that AWOC possessed hefty funding from the AFL-CIO—funds that would ring in at over \$1 million from 1959 to 1965 (Jenkins 1985). Still, even after two years of financed organizing work, some semblance of labor mobilization had not taken root.

As for the NFWA, Cesar Chavez founded the organization in 1962. Chavez has been widely hailed as the architect of successful farm worker mobilization in 1960s California; no doubt, he is the enduring icon of the farm workers movement and Chicano struggle—two distinct yet intertwined social movements. However, the victories of farm labor in the 1960s and into 1970s were the outcome of far more than the masterminding of Cesar Chavez. I argue that union contracts and worker cohesion in the fields of

⁶¹ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, Letter to Ernesto Galarza from Henry Pope Anderson, October 8, 1961, (Box 17, Folder 3).

California were produced, in part, out of the merger of the AWOC (henceforth referred to as the Committee) and the NFWA (henceforth referred to as the Association) in 1966. Further, the merger of both unions represented not only the integration of labor organizations but of racial groups as well: previously segregated Filipino and Mexican farm workers, who were often in competition with each other for agricultural jobs. Thus, this portion of the dissertation traces the trajectory of this merger, focuses on intra-movement dynamics, and details the process of integration as resultant from both internal and external factors. To conclude, the chapter points out the challenges the union would face from various parties as it emerged on the labor union scene.

IGNORING FILIPINOS AND INTERRACIAL LABOR UNIONISM

J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow (1977) theorize that shifts in the external political environment moved along the insurgency efforts of farm workers. Marshall Ganz (2000) poses the Association as an organization, despite being in possession of fewer resources as compared to the Committee, better equipped in its strategy acumen to achieve success. Ganz terms this acumen the “strategic capacity” of the Association. Jenkins (1985) uses one short chapter in his monograph to decry, like Ganz, the flawed approaches of the Committee. An ensuing, much longer, chapter lays out the path to victory, which the Association built up and traveled along. These studies merely mention Filipinos in passing, if at all, and Jenkins’ monograph, for example, pays short shrift to the Committee’s Filipino contingent.

The end result of casting scant attention toward the Committee and Filipino workers is the *assumed inevitability*, which characterizes the merger of the Association and the Committee in the scholarship. In fact, racial amalgamation of Filipino and

Mexican workers was central in producing a new labor front in the fields united along racial lines. Filipino and Mexican workers required cooperation and previous to the grape strikes of 1965-1966 had not exhibited much desire to work with each other toward unionization. How would that process occur? In order to provide an adequate response to the chapter's central research question, an overview of scholarship on social movement mergers, success, and external/internal dynamics is necessary.

THE NEED TO SHIFT AWAY IN ORDER TO MERGE

Some studies focus on social movement coalitions, which may be understood as mergers, such as bloc mobilization or cooptation (McCarthy and Wolfson 1992: 273). These social movement mergers are enacted when social movements and/or social movement organizations (SMOs) come together and are “shaped by preexisting patterns of social relations among the adherents of social movements.” While helpful in comprehension of social movement mergers that follow a linear trajectory toward success, a *preexisting pattern postulation* is less helpful in explanation of social movement mergers that are resultant of a shift *away* from preexisting patterns. McCarthy and Wolfson presuppose that SMO mergers occur because some enabling conditions or set of factors is already in position to thrust the SMO toward success. However, preexisting patterns, though significant, are not set in stone and fortunately so in the case of California farm workers.

Indeed, Filipinos and Mexicans required that the patterns of racial interaction between their respective groups undergo an alteration. Therefore, preexisting patterns were not enabling; they were problematic. The workers had to pivot toward interracial cooperation in order to mobilize successfully. There are elements of what Moon-Kie Jung (2003) refers to as an “ideological transformation” among Filipino and Mexican

workers in regards to race and racial identity as an intra-movement force. Indeed, as Jung shows, both internal and external factors weighed heavily in producing labor victories for Japanese, Filipino and Portuguese workers in Hawaii. Problematically, much of the sociological scholarship on collective action reveals little on how and SMO mergers occur along racial lines when the preexisting pattern of racial interaction did not foretell cooperation but rather pointed to continued division and competition for jobs.⁶² Regardless of whether the preexisting patterns enabled or disabled social movement success, they indeed require attention both internally and externally. Some analyses that focus upon internal social movement dynamics and people of color offer necessary conceptual tools.

Douglas McAdam (1982) and Aldon Morris (1981) write up particularly insightful research that points the way toward internal analysis of social movement dynamics and their integral role in production of success. While recognizing the varied strengths of resource mobilization (RM) theory (see McCarthy and Zald 1973), the authors critically note RM theory's emphasis on external variables. While external variables are of obvious importance, McAdam and Morris argue that a rationally conceived plan of action was key to building successful Black insurgency. Both propose that internally formulated and historically constructed "conducive" and "facilitative" factors enabled social movement victories. Thus, they provide a framework that explicates the formation and significance of internal structures for social movement success. McAdam argues that "pre-existing" structures—again the reference to some

⁶² I maintain that the AWOC and the NFWA were SMOs though many may simply recognize them as aspiring labor unions. They were not typical labor unions as they operated outside the confines of the manufacturing industry trade union tradition and worked with significant numbers of racial/ethnic minorities.

antecedent, success-enabling social condition—formed the base for the Black freedom struggle. Morris reasons against any supposition that spontaneity spurred on Black activism and propelled sit-in waves that occurred in the Deep South. His empirical analysis travels solid ground in detailing the long road of organizational efforts within the Black freedom struggle that led to sit-ins.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE FARM WORKERS MOVEMENT

As for farm worker scholarship in sociology, the work has remained within RM theory's emphasis on external dynamics. Though exhibiting shortcomings, RM theory aids in the demonstration of how social movement organizations—even organization such as the Committee and the Asociacion, which blur the lines between SMO and labor union (see Gordon 2005)—configure, organize, and use resources to advance the cause. The most widely regarded studies of the farm workers movement therefore deem external factors as key to farm worker success thereby mutually excluding internal dynamics. Jenkins (1985) and Jenkins and Perrow (1977) employ RM theory to explain the success farm workers achieved with focus upon external causality.

These reviewed works surmise how change in the external political environment correlated with what is referred to as “the rise and dramatic success of farm worker insurgents” (Jenkins and Perrow 1977: 249). For example, in comparing two eras of farm worker mobilization, 1946 to 1952 and 1965 to 1972, Jenkins (1985) concludes that the UFW was enabled by a ripe political climate. Drawing upon external resources, the UFW secured path-breaking contracts in 1970. Further, Jenkins and Perrow are assertive in (1977: 1249) maintaining that UFW victories are *not* explained “by the internal characteristics of the movement organization.” On the contrary, I maintain that an

internal view of the farm workers movement, not to be exclusively identified with only one organization but with both the Association and the Committee, is beneficial in understanding farm worker success.

However, even in studies of the farm worker movement's decline and deterioration—to be addressed in the final substantive chapter, RM theory is employed interchangeably. Theo Majka and Linda Majka (1993) elucidate some reasons that the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) encountered failure in the 1980s. In a straightforward manner, they argue that permutations in the political environment and opportunities led to movement decline. Further, they propose that social movement processes operate in a cyclical manner—if there is a peak then there must be an ensuing decline. Consequently, the failure of the UFW is explained as an inverse function of the RM thesis. Success and failure arise from variables, which are external. To enable social movement success, helpful external stimuli must be present and if they are absent then social movement failure will ensue. However, the Majka and Majka conclusion is contradictory. Their postulation is that UFW success is rooted in the external but they also argue that UFW failure is due, in part, to extinguished external opportunities and *intra*-union tension. Thus, *intra*-union tension is partially responsible for movement decline, but they attribute none of the success to *intra*-movement phenomena.

SUCCESS THAT FLOWS FROM THE INTERNAL

Definitions of social movement success and failure are slippery terms with which social movement theorists must reckon. William Gamson (1975: 28) defines social movement success for “challenging groups” (farm workers would certainly fit into this category) as being signified by the “acceptance of a challenging group by its antagonists as a valid

spokesman for a legitimate set of interests.” Indeed, the recognition of a farm workers union by growers was a marker of success. However, there were other defining moments of success as well. In the case of Filipino and Mexican farm workers, this occurred when the Association and the Committee *accepted each other* as genuine and equal partners in worker organizing efforts. As it pertains to the merger and as already stated, scholarship on farm workers imposes a persistent inevitability upon the merger of the Association and the Committee; it is either taken for granted or ignored. Consequently, the relationship between two sets: growers/workers and the unions/external factors are deemed most significant. The merger, in and of itself, is taken as axiomatic in analysis of the movement and remains an unexplained axiom at that.

Even in explanations of failure, internal social movement dynamics are commonly ignored though the previously cited work by Majka and Majka (1993) touches upon them. In their provocative study of poor people’s movements, Piven and Cloward (1977) speak to the plight of deprived groups and offer explanations of success and failure. They put forward that social protest is enabled and constrained by social structure. Therefore, from a Marxist perspective, elites remain in charge of social movement phenomena most of the time. Moreover, those who engage in protest, unbeknownst to them, walk into the structured trap of an elite-controlled society. However, Piven and Cloward (1977: 34) hold that, almost always, repression takes effect and even when concessions are made, the elite are endowed with “a powerful image of a benevolent responsive” power structure. Nearly without fail, the elite win out.

Further, as SMOs secure victorious measures, they become institutionalized causes that are co-opted by outside organizations and interest groups. Their reliance on

external resources disables the movement—too many interests and agendas, many of them flowing from more powerful bases, stir the pot. My main concern with the tone and approach of Piven and Cloward and RM theory is the maintaining of focus on elites and/or external stimuli as the variable conditions that must change to create success and ultimately. As the chapter considers the interaction and cooperation between the Association and the Committee, it is imperative to parse out some social movement literature that takes an inward gaze at social movement processes that allows analysis of the confluence of internal and external variables that enable success and cause failure.

INTERNAL MOVEMENT DYNAMICS AND IDENTITY

Daniel Cress and David Snow showcase Jenkins and Perrow's (1977) paper as imperceptible in its argument that external factors hold primacy in the explanation of mobilization success. Cress and Snow (1996: 1094) write that RM theory tends to "emphasize the generic categories of money, people, and legitimacy." However, concentration on these so-called "generic categories" makes sense within RM theory. Further, as we consider that RM theory formed a powerful theoretical response to relative deprivation theory—the idea that people mobilize because they have nothing—RM theory theorized that people, in fact, require resources to mobilize not only extreme dissatisfaction with the status quo. Yet, Cress and Snow's critique is a point well taken: comprehension of internal dynamics is essential in studies of collective mobilization. But specifically, I offer that it is internal dynamics of racial identity that deserve attention in farm worker scholarship.

Racial identity within the movement transformed from a tension producing force to one that united Filipino and Mexican farm workers. Theorizing such a transformation,

from racially split yet spliced in the 1930s to a racially united labor front in the 1960s, is useful to comprehend social movement mergers along racial lines. In his work on identity and the coherence of people into social movements, Alberto Melucci (1988) argues that identity matters a great deal—it provides positive feedback for social movement participants (Biggs 2003) and can propel the movement along. Further, emphasis on identity formation and affirmation within SMOs allows for analysis of internal dynamics that is framed within “cultural and cognitive theories” (Caniglia and Carmin 2006: 205). Melucci (1988: 332) assesses shortcomings in social movement theory and argues that:

social movement participants define in cognitive terms the field of possibilities and limits which they perceive, while at the same time activating their relationships so as to give sense to their “being together” and the goals they pursue.

The fuel of the movement is therefore not only mobilized capital or resources, but also the boost which identity can provide for movement members.⁶³ As that identity becomes something that is shared, it resonates throughout the fold. However, Melucci poses that a process of “perception” of the social movement possibilities is attendant with an “activating” of bonds between social movement participants; somehow, both occur in tandem to produce group cohesion. For farm workers, it seems the activation of a cooperative relationship between the participants was necessary in order to perceive what level of success was possible. Thereafter, internal group relationships and possible labor victories were mutually inclusive variables.

For example, Joshua Gamson (1996: 235) illustrates “ways in which identity boundaries are shaped by and shift through organizational activity” within the gay and

⁶³ Additionally, emotions may be considered another essential component of the farm workers movement. While the sociology of emotions and social movements are not part of the analysis here, the edited book by Flam and King (2005) is a good starting point for the field.

lesbian movement. Gamson (Ibid.) concludes that collective identities take shape and are reconstructed—what we can term *identity formation*—“through organizational bodies” (Taylor and Whittier 1992). I argue that this framework can be extended to an understanding of not only the farm workers movement, but more explicitly to how it drew the Association and the Committee together.

Most notably, the “cultural and cognitive approach” is apt in how it moves social movement analysis beyond by drawing the literature within: to intra-organization and/or intra-movement relationships. Gamson demonstrates that Cress and Daniel’s previously mentioned “generic categories” are helpful in the study of social movements. But what is additionally required is a comprehension of how an SMO acquires its legitimacy, externally and internally, and simultaneously confers legitimacy on its membership. In other words, Filipino and Mexican workers arrived at a point in which they regarded each other as comrades. Moreover, it is a helpful theoretical and empirical venture to understand how internal variables such as race relations within the movement, as Table 4.1 depicts below, form and grow to bind groups together in a social movement and/or SMOs.

Table 4.1: Chapter’s Contribution to Farm Worker and SM Scholarship

	Emphasis	Theory	Cause of Farm Worker Success
Farm Worker Scholarship	External Variables (Resources)	Resource Mobilization	Political Opportunities Controlled By Elites
Chapter’s Contribution	Internal Variables (Interracial Minority Relations)	Social Movement Mergers	Interracial Cooperation Fostered Within the Movement

SPLIT YET SPLICED IN THE FIELDS

Prior to the merger of the Association and the Committee, Filipinos and Mexicans rarely worked together in the fields of California though they dominated the agricultural labor market. Ferris and Sandoval (1997: 100) write that “Filipinos and Mexicans had often been segregated into different picking crews; this separation was often exploited by ranchers to pit one group against another in a labor dispute.” As a consequence of these separate work groups, Filipinos and Mexicans were rooted in different labor organizations. This situation was not solely attributable to landowner exploitation though that was certainly a major factor. There were disparate historical experience and interests that played a role in the racially divided farm working class. Larry Itliong, an indefatigable Filipino labor organizer and UFW Vice-President, wrote of how the merger was significant against the historical backdrop of segregated work crews. Writing in January 1967, Itliong declared:

May I let you know that it was our people [Filipinos in the AWOC] who started the strike. Then our Mexican brothers followed suit. Since then the *cooperation* between these [sic] two groups has been good. It looks to me that this is the real beginning of a [sic] closer relationship between our people. (emphasis added)⁶⁴

Itliong’s letter notes the “cooperation” as Mexicans in the Association constituted a clearly separate organizational body and racial/ethnic group from Filipinos in the Committee. His appraisal of the new union recognizes the newness of the relationship. Up until 1959, Filipino and Mexican workers had not utilized a discourse of multiracialism, color-blindness, or racial unity to advance the farm worker cause. But they had commenced with the usage of such language in the 1960s. Indeed, the employment of the term “Mexican brothers” is significant as it is a reverse of what

⁶⁴ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Jose M. Leonidas from Larry Itliong, January 8, 1967, (Box 1, Folder 4).

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) terms “semantic moves” that represent White racism in reference to people of color. I propose that, in this case, the semantic move is anti-racist, unsubtle, and seeks to rectify divisions—the flip side of Bonilla-Silva’s racist semantic move.

ECONOMIC PROFILE OF FILIPINO AND MEXICAN FARM WORKERS

Yet, Filipinos and Mexicans were spliced groups in that their position as the racially subjugated core of the California agricultural labor force dating back to the 1930s continued on into the 1960s and 1970s. Census data collected in 1960 illustrates this persistent condition of separation between Filipinos and Mexicans was rooted in not only cultural or historical differences but class position within the farm labor market as well. I have cited other scholars in the dissertation that note Filipino-Mexican tension but ultimately regard both groups as workers who, though racially and ethnically split, ultimately constitute a one-in-the-same oppressed group. For example, in detailing the impediments to farm labor unionism Stephen H. Sosnick (1978: 298) opines that “ethnic diversity and impermanent employment militated against a sense of solidarity among co-workers.” While certainly relevant, there was some gap existent between the workers as Filipino workers led a more destitute existence as compared to their Mexican counterparts.

A state of California study (1969: 23) on farm workers, based on data from 1965, displays “earning by ethnic group” in the state’s agricultural labor force. The study analyzed wage levels for 218,200 Mexican farm workers and 16,400 Filipino farm workers. The report offers that Filipinos earned the highest incomes in California agriculture across all racial groups—including White farm laborers. Further, a key

conclusion is that Filipinos operated as “professional” agricultural laborers; they were less likely to migrate among crops as work became available and maintained more permanent forms of agricultural employment. However, the findings apply to the statewide agricultural labor force and thus do not offer information specific to the geographic locales in which the labor strikes of the 1960s were rooted. Further, no matter from which racial/ethnic group “professional” farm workers emanated, I suspect that they would have been some of the least likely workers to engage in strike actions.

The grape strikes, which spurred the farm workers movement to its apex period, occurred in the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) of central, inland California. The previously cited state study determined that (Ibid.: 6) the “San Joaquin Valley is the most significant area both as a pool of farm labor and a source of farm wages.” Two of the largest standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSAs) in the SJV are listed in 1960 census reports as Bakersfield in Kern County and the city of Fresno in the same county. We must turn to Filipino and Mexican income figures specific to this region in order to provide an adequate class profile of grape strike participants.

My calculations drawn from the census data show that in 1960, 41% of employed Mexican origin workers (this includes both Mexican and US born individuals) over the age of 14 labored as “farm laborers and foremen” in Bakersfield. In Fresno, the percentage stood at 46% for the identical demographic group in the same year (U.S. Census 1963). In 1969 as the picket lines were in full swing, I ascertain that 35% of Bakersfield SMSA’s employed adults over age 16 “of Spanish surname”, which I suspect is inclusive of some Filipinos, held a job as “farm laborers and foremen.”⁶⁵ As for the

⁶⁵ Census data cited here is taken from 1970 census reports published in 1973. However, the descriptive statistical tables are compiled from what workers reported for 1969.

Fresno SMSA, the percentage stood at 25% in 1970 (U.S. Census, 1973).⁶⁶ These figures along with median income levels are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Mexican Incomes and Presence in the Farm Labor Force, 1970

	Median Incomes	% Employed in Farm Labor
Bakersfield SMSA	\$6241	35%
Fresno SMSA	\$5914	25%

As for incomes, I do not provide figures specific to farm laborers in both SMSAs. However, in 1970, data for thirteen SMSAs in California (including Los Angeles and the Bay Area) were collected and the two lowest median income scores statewide for “Spanish surname” families were found in Bakersfield (\$6241 per year) and Fresno (\$5914 per year) where substantial levels of Mexicans were employed in farm labor. While I do not have conclusive evidence yet to substantiate that these extremely low incomes are indicative of substandard farm wages, I suspect that the relationship is indeed prominent. In fact, the only SMSAs nationwide with lower median incomes for “Spanish surname” families were in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Indeed, it is quite likely that the poorest Mexican origin people in the US, in 1970, labored and lived as farm workers in either one of the rich agribusiness industries of central California or South Texas (Ibid.).

⁶⁶ I cannot offer complete explanation of why there is a drop in the agricultural labor force numbers from 1960 to 1970. One partial explanation is the change of age demographic from “14 and over” in 1960 data to “16 and over” in 1970 data. Another explanation may be the Vietnam War. For Mexican Americans, this is not an uncommon trajectory. In my own family history, several men went directly from farm labor to military service. Irrespective of the downward shift, the numbers in both years demonstrate the centrality of Mexicans to the agricultural labor force.

As for Filipinos, some census information speaks directly to their socioeconomic and generational position within California agriculture. Data for the Bakersfield and Fresno SMSAs on Filipinos was seemingly not collected and therefore the following information is based on numbers collected statewide and displayed in Table 4.3. In 1960, 6,255 Filipinos over the age of 14 worked as “farm laborers and foremen” within the state. Ten years later, this number for the same age group remained relatively stable but declined to 5,137. However, in both years, a considerable number of Filipino farm workers were 45 to 64 years of age—4,853 in 1960 and 2,923 in 1970. On the whole, Filipino median incomes are considerably lower than Mexican workers. The total median income for Filipinos, 16 and over, in both “urban” and “rural” California residences was \$4698 for men and \$3469 for women. Removing the effect of urban Filipino incomes details the difficult circumstances for Filipinos in rural California locales. The rural income figures for Filipinos are the lowest of any cited in the chapter: \$3,334 for men and \$1,844 for women. In fact, many Filipino farm workers were single men but the income data for women demonstrates how the inability to marry and thus have dual incomes may have hurt their economic status even further.

Table 4.3: Filipino Median Incomes in California, 1970

	Urban & Rural	Rural
Men	\$4698	\$3334
Women	\$3469	1844

A UNION OF THEIR OWN

Indeed, Filipinos and Mexicans may have been divided by cultural and ethnic differences but as demonstrated, material inequality stratified Mexican workers above Filipino workers. In 1972, Cesar Chavez informed a journalist that indeed there was a racial gap that the movement confronted among its constituency, but did not interpret it as a chasm reflected by income inequality between the groups. Although Filipino farm workers were small in number as compared to Mexicans, Chavez deemed them necessary for successful mobilization. Therefore, Chavez sought to bridge the gap in order to propel the movement along with every bit of human capital, which it could muster: “The growers are totally antiunion and every step is a fight. Our strike funds are limited. We have to weld a lot of minority groups together.”⁶⁷ Among some Filipino partisans, the racial division meant that Filipinos required their own farm labor union. But a Mexican-led union provided an adequate substitute. Certainly, no scholarship on the formation of the UFW characterizes the process as a temporary fix for Filipino workers.

However, in 1971, Porfirio U. Sevilla, head of the Filipino American Citizens’ League, expressed his gratitude to Cesar Chavez for working with Filipino farm workers “in the absence of their own organization.”⁶⁸ Sevilla reflects a similar tone to that which is observed in Itliong’s previously cited letter. Sevilla expresses some expectation or desire for a Filipino body or labor union, which would advocate specifically for Filipino farm workers and offers to Chavez a kind of working partnership and a chance “to meet each for an exchange of views.” Further, Sevilla expresses confidence that they can

⁶⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, “Cesar Chavez---Out of Sight but Still in Fight,” February 14, 1972, p. A3.

⁶⁸ UFW—Office of the President, Reuther Library, Letter to Cesar Chavez from Porfirio U. Sevilla, April 15, 1971, (Box 64, Folder 22).

“reach a mutual understanding for the better welfare of both our groups!”⁶⁹ This notion was not a manifestation of some new Asian American or Filipino ethnic nationalism. Rather, I contend that this sentiment was deeply rooted in a history of Filipino efforts to form ethnic specific farm worker unions in California dating back to the 1930s (Jamieson 1945). Mexicans confronted a different historical experience as farm workers as they encountered large numbers of Bracero workers since 1942 that had altered the configuration of Mexican *and* American identity among Mexican origin workers.

Indeed, in 1959, before the founding of the Association, the Committee and its Filipino contingent formed the keystone in the farm worker mobilization effort. Ernesto Galarza, an ardent Mexican American farm labor organizer and anti-Bracero crusader, offered high praise of the Committee:

The agricultural employer interests now fully recognize the AWOOC as the expression of a full commitment [sic] by organized labor to assist and organize the farm workers in California.⁷⁰

Galarza’s appraisal should not be underestimated. He partook in labor strikes and NFLU organizing activities throughout the 1940s and 1950s, though most of his energies were directed toward dismantling the Bracero Program. Furthermore, in the late 1950s, Galarza attempted to broker cooperation between the NFLU and the Community Services Organization (CSO), headed by Cesar Chavez’s mentor, Fred Ross.⁷¹

The CSO, funded by Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation, had done organization work with Mexican American communities in California urban areas.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, Memorandum to Franz Daniel from Ernesto Galarza, November, 3, 1959, (Box 4, Folder 6).

⁷¹ Fred Ross Papers, Green Library, Diary Entry, July 9, 1957, (Box 1, Folder 19) While most of the diary entries do not list a year, two of the typewritten pages have “1957” or ‘57’ scribbled near the top of the page.

Chavez was on the CSO payroll and based himself in San Jose until 1962 when he moved to Delano to found the Association. After nearly four years of working within the Association in July 1966, only two months before the merger and in the midst of grape strikes orchestrated by both unions, the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) singled out the Association, and not the Committee, as “THE BEST HOPE FOR THE FARM WORKERS THAT HAS EVER COME BY IN ALL THE YEARS OF AGONY, SACRIFICE AND HOPE.”⁷² A shift had occurred. Seven years prior Galarza had anointed the Committee as the standard bearer in the farm workers movement and in fact had been hired to be “nominally assistant” (Galarza 1977: 32) to Director Norman Smith, but the Association soon after its inception experienced a rapid ascension in the movement. Even as Chavez and the Association emerged into prominence, it was Filipinos who led the way not only in strike activity, but also in employment of an interracial discourse.

WORKING OUT A HISTORY OF TENSION

The Committee had labored to implement an infrastructure that would enable successful mobilization of farm workers. In the early 1960s, the Committee had produced significant labor organizing activities and provided some respite for workers. In 1961, Filipino workers displayed their organizing mettle in Santa Cruz. Two hundred ten workers in Brussels sprouts, nearly all Filipinos, engaged in a strike referred to in a trilingual edition [English, Spanish, and Tagalog] of the AWOC newsletter as essential “to the survival of the whole farm labor movement.”⁷³ The strike instantly garnered a

⁷² AWOC Papers, Reuther Library, MAPA: Special Newsletter and Urgent Request to All Chapters from Edward Quevedo, July 16, 1966, (Box 7, Folder 16).

⁷³ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, The Agricultural Worker/El Trabajador Agrícola, Vol. 1, No. 3 October 28, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 4).

wage increase from \$1 per hour to \$1.10, but the workers wanted \$1.25 an hour and the right to collectively bargain.⁷⁴

Larry Itliong went before the newly formed Committee branch, which the workers had formed for the express interest of organizing a strike. Though they momentarily represented the vanguard of the farm workers movement in the Committee, there was recognition that the Filipinos could not sustain long-term farm labor agitation on their own. Itliong implored the workers:

I would like to plead to you for the sake of our own group...I know and you know we have been abused a lot of times...But let us forget those abuses we have had in the past. Let us win the friendship of all other groups by showing them our cooperation, by showing them we know how to fight battles, by showing them we have the courage to be together.⁷⁵

While not crying out for any sort of merger, one would not have been possible at this time anyway as the Association did not yet exist, Itliong identifies a need for Filipino farm workers to assemble under the protective cover of bigger numbers. There is recognition of a shared but conflicted history with other farm workers, but that in the face of powerful landowners and the state, workers of color would require interminority cooperation.⁷⁶ As they neared the merger, John Gregory Dunne (1971: 155), who conducted interviews with several prominent actors as events occurred in the farm worker movement, reported that a merger would be a challenge because of the tension between Filipinos and Mexicans, which was deemed “a potentially uncomfortable racial situation” as both groups possessed “little love for each other.”

⁷⁴ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, Bulletin “TO ALL THE FRIENDS OF FARM WORKERS” from Rufino Nachor, October 24, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 7).

⁷⁵ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, The Agricultural Worker/El Trabajador Agrícola Newsletter, Vol. 1 No. 3, October 28, 1961, (Box 4, Folder 4).

⁷⁶ Intermorality or what Claire Jean Kim and Taeku Lee term “Interracial Politics,” receives scant attention in historical studies. It is often a phenomenon associated with the post-riot condition of Los Angeles in 1992.

Speaking to those Filipino workers in Santa Cruz, it is clear therefore that Itliong recognized that Mexican workers were that group with which Filipino workers would need to unite. Most certainly, Itliong was not referencing White workers. In 1959 and two years thereafter, Norman Smith, the first Director of the Committee, had made efforts to recruit White workers into organizing initiatives. But Smith had barked up the wrong tree and his overall performance drew the chagrin of Galarza who wrote that

the shock of Smith's performance has shaken our friends severely. As field workers they seriously question whether any top AFL-CIO officials understand or care [sic] for the problem of field workers as such.⁷⁷

Indeed, several letters that came across Smith's desk reveal that many White workers had corresponded with the Director and that Smith was eager to advocate on their behalf.⁷⁸

Obviously, Galarza was disappointed. His optimistic feelings on the Committee, which he had expressed a year earlier, were vanquished.⁷⁹ J. Craig Jenkins (1999: 285) comments that the Committee focused on White workers and ignored Filipinos who "were organized, largely because of their strong ethnic ties and job pride as the most skilled field workers." However, it is key to note that indeed Filipinos constituted an organized set of workers. Regardless of whether the Committee paid ample attention to Filipino labor interests, Philip L. Martin (1996: 85) suggests that the organization did "help to raise the wages of Filipino grape pickers." Consequently, Filipinos were able to maintain themselves as an enabling ingredient to successful farm worker mobilization that occurred later.

⁷⁷ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Green Library, Supplementary report, May 23, 1960, (Box 4, Folder 10).

⁷⁸ Some of these letters can be located in the AWOC papers, Reuther Library, (Box 5, Folder 4). These letters were signed by English-surnamed individuals who could have been Black workers. But this is doubtful as Jenkins (1985) points out that Director Smith focused his organizing efforts on White workers and not workers of color. Majka (1981) also confirm this point.

⁷⁹ In his 1977 book, Galarza admits that organizing farm workers was a tough business and that even he himself was ill-prepared with the knowledge of how to carry out the task.

While the leadership of the Committee perhaps erred in its strategic approach—at least according to Galarza and Jenkins as well—the Filipino contingent produced a labor leader in Itliong who was undeniably the leader of Filipino farm laborers (Sosnick 1978) and argued for the necessity of interracial labor unionism. Further, observers of the burgeoning farm workers movement noted that Director Smith, and it seems his misdirected efforts, had dissipated into the background, while individuals such as Louis Krainock took the reigns of the Committee.⁸⁰ Krainock, the Committee’s Director of Public Information, responded to a union supporter, who called out for a multiracial farm workers’ union, by employing a race-neutral, rather than an interracial or multiracial, discourse. Krainock insisted that:

‘Color blindness’ is an essential for us. If we do not learn from the lessons of past history, we’re headed for trouble...I do not believe, however, that AWOC is going to make these mistakes.⁸¹

The next year, Filipino Brussels sprouts workers would listen to the same message from Itliong though his tone, I would assert, was most certainly *not* colorblind. However, the history of farm labor organization history and its failed efforts to unionize workers is not one of simple mistakes and miscalculations. The racial politics of the movement were such that a reconfiguration of class and racial divisions between Filipinos and Mexicans would be necessary. That is, the groups would have to merge in order to create a successful farm workers movement.

FORGING AN INTERRACIAL UNION

Taken together, Itliong and Krainock speak out for “forgiveness” of the past when Filipinos and Mexicans formed labor unions, but as separate groups (Jamieson 1945).

⁸⁰ “Lettuce Farm Strike Part of Deliberate Union Plan” *Los Angeles Times* January 23, 1961, p. B1.

⁸¹ AWOC Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Louis Krainock to Lillian Ransome, February 22, 1960, (Box 5, Folder 4).

Indeed, this aim to build a multiracial union sprouted from the belief that agricultural labor was composed of exploited people of color—groups that hopefully would or should recognize their commonalities and intertwined history as working class racial groups. It appeared logical to farm worker activists that class had to be emphasized, coupled along with the disremembering process, in order to unite the racially split workforce.

Moreover, some radicals within the movement such as Filipino organizer, Philip Vera Cruz, envisioned a future in which a multiracial farm working class would confront big capital in the fields of California: “Filipinos and Mexicans are not the only farm workers. In the near future, Growers will be negotiating with Puerto Ricans, Arabs, whites, black and whomever will be.” As the formation of a united farm working class took hold, these workers would evolve into “union negotiators” who were “tougher and more demanding.”⁸²

Krainock, in 1959, transmitted a “blueprint” to Director Smith of how the newly formed Committee should proceed with its initial efforts. The document, quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1961, stated “the financial, social, and ideological structure of agribusiness is built on cheap labor—upon some bracero concept whether it be Mexican, Japanese, Filipino, or Puerto Rican.”⁸³ If in fact this was the case that farm labor was composed of oppressed racial minorities, then farm workers had a difficult barrier to surmount, because each group would not envision itself as a racial/ethnic monolith and as I have shown, Filipino and Mexican workers were no class monoliths either. Historical sociological scholarship by Moon-Kie Jung (2003) on the multiracial working class in

⁸² Reuther Library, UFW Papers—Office of the President, Part II, Ideology Paper by Philip Vera Cruz: “Radical Perspectives in the Farm Workers Movement,” n.d., (Box 50, Folder 7). Though no date is provided on this document, it is almost certain that the paper is written sometime between 1965 and 1973.

⁸³ “Lettuce Farm Strike Part of Deliberate Union Plan” *Los Angeles Times* January 23, 1961, p. B1

Hawaii illustrates how workers of color, previously divided by class and race, were able to mold “one big union” by a “disremembering” of a history of slights and injuries between Filipino and Japanese plantation workers. In the California fields, some similar process of disconnection or forgiveness would have to occur in order for successful mobilization. As will be shown, this detachment or forgiveness of the past would occur, but it would prove to be only a fleeting moment of interracial labor unionism.

As for the Association, the organization had its own modest philosophical argument for a multiracial farm workers’ union as well. Dolores Huerta informed Saul Alinsky in 1962 that “we are also going to aim at the Negro and white farm worker community” in organization efforts.⁸⁴ Huerta’s desire to reach out to a wide swath of workers demonstrates that both organizations conceded that interracial cooperation would be necessary for mobilization success. I argue that this represented more than a politically correct presentation of the movement by farm worker activists. It seems that, most certainly, the organizers had sized up the racial landscape among workers and discerned that interracial unity was a central variable that could disable or enable the movement. Moreover, that plea for interracial unity was specifically a desire for Filipino and Mexican integration within the movement.

Theo Majka (1980) propounds that dating back to the labor agitation of the 1930s, Filipino and Mexican workers were the groups that were most “organizable” and most likely to participate in labor unionism. During this decade, Majka (Ibid: 302) argues that unions such as the UCAPAWA concentrated on “white Dust Bowl migrants rather than the more class conscious Mexican and Filipino workers.” Thus, among farm workers,

⁸⁴ Fred Ross Papers, Green library, letter from Dolores Huerta to Saul Alinsky, June 13, 1962 (Box 2, Folder 3).

Filipino and Mexican workers are noted as labor agitators and three decades later they had still not fomented labor union success together or separately. Moreover, Mae Ngai (2004) argues that white workers did not labor in the fields, but in the sheds and packinghouses. That is, it was Filipinos and Mexicans dating back to the 1930s who dominated field labor.

PICKETING TOWARD A MERGER

In 1962, Cesar Chavez and his Association embarked on their agenda of organizing agricultural laborers. The focus was upon Mexican field workers, though there was an employment of a multiracial discourse that alluded to the need for a racially integrated union. Chavez began this work modestly by addressing the material shortcomings in farm workers' lives. His initial aim was to provide for basic needs of Mexican workers and he offered services such as burial insurance, an auto parts cooperative, and a credit union (Edid 1994). While both organizations may have been on the same page in this regard and recognized the need for cross-racial cooperation, the Association distrusted the Committee and Louis Krainock, in particular. Indeed, both groups saw the need for a merger and racial integration of workers, but that merger was also subject to the interests of each organization to assert its power within the movement.

Dolores Huerta, one of Chavez's main confidantes and perhaps the most important organizer, expressed deep animosity for the Committee. She relayed to Chavez that "AWOC is having meetings in the camps. It seems they copy everything I do. But they are usually [sic] going in with their false promises, and the workers are already kicking."⁸⁵ In the letter's overall text and discussion of several matters, it is nearly certain that the note is written sometime in 1962—on the heels of Itliong's and

⁸⁵ AWOC Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Dolores Huerta to Cesar Chavez, n.d., (Box 2, Folder 14).

Krainock's calls for racial unity among workers. In another letter, Huerta refers to Krainock as a "megalomaniac" [sic] who "has been successful in conning the Longshoremen and the Teamsters to put up some dough for his operation."⁸⁶

Huerta's distrust of the Committee aside, it is true that the Committee was well connected to the most powerful levels of the US labor union hierarchy (Jenkins 1985). Keenly aware of this, it is logical that an organization such as the Association, standing outside of that power structure, would feel antagonistic toward the Committee. Nevertheless, the key point here is that these two organizations regarded each other as competitors—they possessed the same goals but perhaps had different tactical and political agendas. Ever mindful of who backed the Committee, Chavez advised Huerta to "avoid fights with [the Committee] AWOC."⁸⁷

Early in the spring of 1965, Filipino and Mexican grape pickers negotiated a wage of \$1.40 per hour, the same wage Braceros were paid, in the Coachella Valley near the town of Delano in Kern County, which would serve as the center of farm worker mobilization operations from 1965 to 1970. The wage rate of \$1.40 was not an arbitrary number, which growers or workers conjured up. US Secretary of Labor, Willard Wirtz, had set the wage rate for foreign agricultural labor, but oddly, this type of wage protection was in use for foreign agricultural labor only.⁸⁸ As grape workers followed the harvest and labor route north of Delano, they found that the \$1.40 hourly rate would not be paid to them. Subsequent to some fits and starts, Itliong organized Filipino workers to commence strike activity on September 8, 1965 in order to demand the \$1.40 wage. After a few days of unpicked grape fields, landowners secured replacement Mexican

⁸⁶ AWOC Papers, letter to Cesar Chavez from Dolores Huerta, n.d., (Box 2, Folder 14).

⁸⁷ AWOC Papers, quoted in letter to Cesar Chavez from Dolores Huerta, n.d., (Box 2, Folder 12).

⁸⁸ "Tension Grows While Grape Strike Spreads" *Los Angeles Times* September 30, 1965, pg. 36.

workers (Dunne 1971). Itliong reported “Our people wanted to beat up the scabs. That’s when I went to see Cesar and asked him to help me” (Ibid: 78-79). On September 16, Mexican Independence Day, the Association made the decision to join Filipino workers on the picket lines. Some analysts (Edid 1994: 40, also see Jenkins 1999)

Itliong would encounter dissension because of the merger with Chavez and the Association. Significantly, there was criticism from fellow Filipinos as well. One group, identifying themselves as the Filipino Americanism Society (FAS), asked Filipino strikers:

CAN’T YOU SEE THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE USING YOU TO FORM AN ORGANIZATION THAT WILL GIVE THEM POWER AND GREAT WEALTH? THEY ARE NOT SO CONCERNED WITH YOUR WELFARE AS THEY ARE WITH THEIR OWN SELFISH REASONS...AS LONG AS YOU DO NOT JOIN A UNION: NO UNION WILL BE FORMED HERE.⁸⁹

With its closing exhortation, the FAS claimed that Filipino workers were the linchpin of the strike activity; they held the key to whether contracts would be signed or not, whether or not the union would be taken seriously. In actuality, this is a sentiment that would be echoed by other Filipino-affiliated participants in the movement—the Filipinos were the heart and soul of the farm worker collective action.

Further, the FAS did not size up the emergent union agenda as helpful for Filipino workers. They deemed it necessary to speak directly to Filipino workers as a group with a varying agenda from that of Mexican workers. The Filipino consul in Los Angeles, Alexjandro F. Holigores, also voiced his concern in regards to Filipino involvement in the strikes. The consul had personally paid for radio ads encouraging Filipino strikers that “it is my deep conviction that that the interests of the Filipino workers would be best

⁸⁹ NFWA Papers, Reuther Library, bulletin to striking Filipino workers from the Filipino Americanism Society, n.d., Box 6, Folder number omitted. No date is apparent on this document, but it is almost certainly written sometime in late 1965 or in 1966 as the bulletin notes that “OVER ONE HUNDRED (100) DAYS HAVE PASSED” since the strikes had commenced in September 1965.

served if they returned to their respective camps.” The consul noted that he had asked growers to meet the \$1.40 per hour demand. The Committee responded with a swift rebuke to the consul and labeled him a “tool of the growers.”⁹⁰

Nevertheless, the merger became official in August 1966.⁹¹ But this merger was not a unidirectional relationship in which Filipinos needed Mexican support but Mexicans could have gone it alone. Indeed, as argued in the introduction, the bringing together of multiracial workers into a merged union is portrayed as an inevitable occurrence in much of the literature of the farm workers movement. We see that it, in fact, was not inevitable: both groups had competing agendas and interests within the movement. Though smaller in number, as compared to Mexican workers, the Association understood that the resource of the Filipino membership was a key ingredient in the new union’s labor efforts.

In fact, the Association did little to instigate the strikes; they had been caught unaware. Chavez revealed that he was apparently so focused on the concerns of his own organization that “The first I heard of it [the strikes] was when people came to me and said the Filipinos had gone out. They [Filipino workers] were mad that the Filipinos weren’t working and the Mexicans were” (Dunne: 79). Thus, it was the Committee’s Filipino contingent that had crossed a threshold of social movement activity and tipped farm workers over into a state of mobilized labor agitation. Chavez was pushed into the strikes by an organization, which the scholarship has depicted as unimportant and even inconsequential. Further, Filipinos and Mexicans in the Committee and the Association

⁹⁰ “Filipino Consul Hit for Plea to Grape Strikers” *Los Angeles Times* October 6, 1965, pg. A8.

⁹¹ UFW Papers—Office of the President Files, Reuther Library, AFL-CIO Official Charter, August 23, 1966, (Box 71, Folder 6).

noted each other as adversaries in the competition for agricultural jobs. Both organizations had to move toward a negotiation and agreement that was acceptable before embarking on massive labor mobilization efforts.

As the workers embarked upon strike activity from 1965 to 1970, Filipino and Mexican workers struggled to maintain *movement viability*. There had been but a handful of significant strikes throughout the previous twenty years. Thus, as the Filipino and Mexican workers required each other for strike action, the workers were presented to the media, growers, and workers that had not yet decided to join in the strikes as a racially united workers' front. Chavez wrote a letter to an unspecified newspaper editor to shed light on the cause and "to describe a little about the conditions surrounding the strike here Delano, involving 4000 Mexican Americans and Filipinos."⁹² As he details the struggle, Chavez sketches a portrait of this unity by lumping all the workers together into his count of 4000 strikers.

This count of racially mixed workers became a point of contention during the strikes and even in the historical assessment of what occurred. Growers asserted that only 500 workers were on strike, while the union insisted that between 2,000 and 4,000 workers had walked off the job.⁹³ In his memoirs, Philip Vera Cruz (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000: 107), a highly ranked union officer and prominent Filipino American activist, asserted that "at the time of the merger, there were probably more Filipinos involved with the union than Mexicans." Another union supporter and participant in

⁹² UFWOC Papers, Letter addressed "Dear Editor from Cesar Chavez, October 1965, (Box 2, Folder 6).

⁹³ Ibid.: *Los Angeles Times*.

boycott activities noted that “the Filipino farm worker...was [sic] the backbone of the strike...without the Filipino, there would not have been a strike in the first place.”⁹⁴

A SHIFTY BASE

John Gregory Dunne (1971) details how the lead-up to the merger was littered with anxiety because of tensions between Filipinos and Mexicans. Therefore, the language that we see from Chavez’s note to the Editor is a quick turnaround from the relationship that existed before strikes ensued. C. Al Green, successor to Norman Smith at the helm of the Committee, desired no cooperation with Chavez’s Association. However, Itliong and Chavez had opened a line of communication with each other and AFL-CIO Director of Organizing, William Kircher, was in favor of the merger. Itliong stated that:

Kircher told me not to worry about Al Green... He said he’d take care of him. I began bypassing Green and working directly with Kircher. Finally, in August, Cesar and Kircher and I decided, “Let’s do it.” (Ibid: 155)

But when the merger occurred, it was a relationship that some doubted and it tested the organizational loyalties and visions of movement participants. Bill Berg, a boycott leader in New York, wrote of his feelings during the merger process, “Well, I have never been one little bit sorry for doing what I could for the striking AWOC’s and can remember that you and I had more than one argument about ‘the other side’.” Berg’s allusion to the Association as an opposing organization frames Chavez’s group as a competing organizational body. Further, it demonstrates distrust emanating from movement participants whose roots were in the Committee as Huerta had expressed from her position within the Association. As a result of the merger of the Association and the

⁹⁴ Reuther Library, Larry Itliong Papers, letter from Bill Berg to Larry Itliong, December 15, 1972, (Box 1, Folder 12).

Committee, it created a feeling of alienation for some. Berg relayed that “After the merger, there never was a place for me so I left.”⁹⁵

Itliong also communicates this sense of varying roots to Chavez in a 1968 letter. Though the communiqué is long after the merger, it reveals how the Filipino and Mexican rank and file located their own identity as farm workers: in racial/ethnic identity and organizational body. In the letter, Itliong continued a discussion with Chavez in regards to a car purchased by the union for Itliong’s use:

I know your concern with the Mexican brothers about their seeing me drive a new car, and the Union making the payment for it. As for me on the Filipino side they knew I have been driving new cars before I worked for AWOC [Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee] and its [sic] not new to them.⁹⁶

Apparently, Chavez was having a difficult time explaining the purchase of the vehicle to the Mexican workers in the union. Ultimately, Itliong would not budge on the purchase and use of the vehicle and would leave it to Chavez to explain the necessity of the car to the “Mexican brothers.” However, the car represented more than a mere vehicle. To the “Mexican brothers,” the car connoted the different history and roots that Itliong had in the Filipino dominated Committee before he became a union officer with access to an official union car.

Furthermore, there were external pressures being applied to the Association and the Committee before and after the merger. The surfacing of such problems would produce enormous tension within the organization and prove quite damaging for the newly minted union as they proceeded to sign contracts and extend them past termination dates. Still, at the point of signing contracts, the union seemed ready to take on such challenges.

⁹⁵ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Larry Itliong from Bill Berg, December 16, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12).

⁹⁶ Reuther Library, letter from Larry Itliong to Cesar Chavez, August 10, 1968, (Box 2, Folder 5).

EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON INTERNAL SUCCESS

The AFL-CIO agreed to grant a charter to the newly merged union, temporarily named the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC). This action raised the ire of what would become another UFWOC nemesis: The Teamsters. In late August 1966, Governor Edmund G. Brown wired a congratulatory telegram to the UFWOC upon hearing that the AFL-CIO charter had come through. The Teamsters termed the celebratory note as “prejudicial” to their interests and “is inconsistent with the prospects of fair play, demonstrates bias, and is in extremely poor taste.” Ironically, or perhaps the situation was not so add after all, the Teamsters’ and then gubernatorial candidate and soon to be Governor Ronald Reagan garnered representation from the same public relations outfit. Reagan and the growers sided with the Teamsters in their desire to block out the UFWOC. Growers continually favored the Teamsters as the union representative of farm workers and their inclination to nix strike activity during peak seasons.⁹⁷

In consolidating, perhaps Filipino and Mexican workers encountered a point in which they understood their common needs and histories. But within a relationship fraught with tense interactions and racial divisions, why would Filipino and Mexican workers merge their labor organizations? In his work, Jenkins (1985) poses the Committee as a moribund labor organization and contends that its Filipino membership was its only active element thus assessing the merger as a moment, which held little significance for sociological investigation. However, it is clear from the primary data presented here that there was a road upon which the Association and Committee *negotiated* in order to foster an interracial cooperation that was deemed necessary to succeed in strike and contract bargaining processes.

⁹⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, “Handshakes Seal Pact Ending Grape Boycott,” July 30, 1970, p. 3

However, farm labor organizers recognized the moment as significant. Time and again, organizers note that the merger of Filipino and Mexican workers under one umbrella organization is a momentous event—indeed they were aware that this was the greatest uprising of farm workers since the strikes of the 1930s and made this as part of the movement discourse.⁹⁸ As Itliong told a Filipino American booster in a letter, the Filipino and Mexican coalition was long overdue since “we [Filipinos and Mexicans] have the same problem facing us.”⁹⁹

However, the merger was not a simplistic point of realization in which both groups simply had an awakening of sorts. Filipinos and Mexicans expressed a pragmatic understanding that they required each other’s help to mobilize. However, this does not mean that the amalgamation of Filipino and Mexican workers under the guise of the newly formed UFWOC would be an easy task.

In July 1970 as the strikes, along with secondary boycotts administered throughout the country, concluded with signed contracts, the union clearly recognized more organization was necessary. Still, the new contract provisions were landmark concessions from growers. Grape workers, nearly 8000 of them, fell under the protective cover of a collective bargaining agreement that provided an hourly wage of \$1.80, which would increase fifteen cents for the ensuing years of 1971 and 1972, plus a twenty cent bonus for every box of grapes. Yet, during the same period, the Teamsters made inroads with thirty growers up north in the Salinas Valley. On the day contracts were signed, the Teamsters called Chavez a “Johnny come-lately into this thing” and Bill Kircher of the

⁹⁸ Reuther Library, UFWOC Papers, NFWA Bulletin, n.d., (Box 2, Folder 2) The bulletin has no date but the text states that the strike has been ongoing for “nearly three months.” We can surmise that the bulletin was posted around the first week of December 1965.

⁹⁹ Reuther Library, Larry Itliong Papers, letter from Larry Itliong to Jose M. Leonidas, January 31, 1967, (Box 1, Folder 4).

AFL-CIO asserted that the UFWOC had the “right to be THE union that builds a collective bargaining base.”¹⁰⁰ And, in actuality, the Association and the Committee had only accomplished just that: established a base. What occurred afterwards would be a monumental test for an organizational body that had only set its path to secure equality for farm workers of color.

CONCLUSION

Filipino and Mexican farm workers, throughout the twentieth century, had endeavored to create successful worker mobilization. However, it is in the 1960s that we witness interracial farm labor mobilization in California. The social movement literature has previously paid little attention to merger processes in the analysis on social movement organization—a logical outcome of the failure to peer into the racial politics of farm workers movement. Further, the integration of Filipino and Mexican workers in 1966 into their new labor organization has not been analyzed for the remarkable interminority integration of workers of color that occurred. This chapter has sought to fill this void by focusing on this momentous event and to demonstrate why the merger was such a significant event.

Further, this “union of unions” was not an inevitable, “natural” occurrence. There was, perhaps, what Jung (2003) would term an “ideological transformation” among California’s multiracial farm working class. That is, Filipinos and Mexicans did more than simplistically recognize that they required each other’s aid. Certainly, the thesis and theory of resource mobilization does shed some light on what occurred in the grape fields. The timing was opportune and elites aided the striking farm workers, but theorization of successful mobilization of farm workers in the 1960s provides only an

¹⁰⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, “Handshakes Seal Pact Ending Grape Boycott,” July 30, 1970, p. 3.

explanation of external factors that created interracial unionization. By assessing the inner workings of the movement, we witness how Filipinos and Mexican workers indeed, had to come together. Thus, we can comprehend how variables external and internal to the movement operated in tandem to mold a social movement organization which farm workers had battled for, with little success, throughout the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 5: NO PODEMOS/NO, WE CAN'T: THE DECLINE AND DETERIORATION OF THE FARM WORKERS MOVEMENT

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The amalgamation of Filipinos and Mexican workers into the UFW was momentous. The laborious process of fomenting interracial labor unionism had traveled an arduous path and in so doing the consolidation of the AWOC and the NFWA required that farm workers rely on a host of resources. These repositories of sustenance existed both without and within the organization that became the UFW. Protestant and Catholic Church figures and activists pitched in. Labor unions such as the United Auto Workers (UAW) and their powerful chief, Walter Reuther, made hefty pledges of cash and made public displays of solidarity with striking farm workers. To some extent, the farm workers movement transformed into a cause célèbre—it became a “darling” movement of some on the left. Additionally, and most essential for the overarching argument of this dissertation, the previous chapter maintained that the subscription to an ideological construct of working class cross-racial cooperation was essential for mobilization success—something that is hardly, if ever, noted or analyzed in scholarly accounts of the farm workers movement. However, the act of fostering mobilization success for one moment or period of time is a different type of collective action than the continuous process of mobilization maintenance. Indeed, the UFW would encounter some obstacles, which they were unable to overcome.

What follows is a narrative about and analysis on the decline and deterioration of the UFW. The causes were several. The union began to confront a depletion of funds, the loss of loyal supporters, repressive measures from the gubernatorial administration of Ronald Reagan, competition with their labor union nemesis: the Teamsters, and not least

of all, in-fighting among members around issues of racial politics among Filipinos and Mexicans.

INTRODUCTION

On his path to the presidency, Barack Obama invoked the rallying cry of “Yes, we can”/ “Sí, se puede” at many of his campaign gatherings—often he ensured to make the call to his huge crowds in both English and Spanish. Oddly, I never observed any note by then Senator Obama or campaign surrogates of the phrase’s prominence—and to my own knowledge its origins—in the farm workers movement. Still, the proclamation of “Sí, se puede” is perhaps, for much of the US population, the only possible connection to or recognition of the fact that there was a farm workers movement.¹⁰¹ What did happen to the farm workers movement after its success?

Alas, a recent and downright scathing assessment of the UFW by the *Los Angeles Times* revealed an oligarchic, moribund organization—moribund at least in terms of doing the work of farm labor organization.¹⁰² The *Times* journalist found that the UFW maintained a mostly symbolic connection to its rich history of organizing farm workers. This chapter presents an analysis of social movement decline with the use of theories of social movements and networks; that is, we must answer the question of how movements come apart? But to consign what follows to the mere category of an enticing historical sociological puzzle to solve in a dissertation or any other scholarly effort is to pay short

¹⁰¹ Even among Mexican origin people, recognition of the UFW can be contentious. My own family members criticize Cesar Chavez because he “was in it for himself.” My father is appalled that Chavez, who operated in California, is recognized with a regional highway named after him in our native South Texas. The anecdotal evidence reveals what I interpret to be an intra-group critique: Chavez did not address the struggles of Mexican origin people throughout all of the US Southwest.

¹⁰² See the article series in issues from the week of January 8, 2006: “Farmworkers Reap Little as Union Strays From Its Roots,” “The UFW Betrays Its Legacy as Farmworkers Struggle,” “The Family Business: Insiders Benefit Amid a Complex of Charities,” and “The Roots of Today’s Problems Go Back Three Decades.”

shrift to the consequences of poor people's movements' decline. Indeed, the fall of the house of farm labor is nothing less than tragic as it represents the atrophic process that the groundbreaking organization has undergone since the creation of stunning labor victories in the California fields.

Times' reports offer that the UFW is alive and well as a thriving organization; it simply does not focus on its original mission. For example, a series of articles shows that Paul Chavez, son of Cesar Chavez, heads the union's National Farm Workers Service Center at a salary of over \$124,000 per year but few efforts are directed at collective bargaining. Instead Chavez' son explains that his energies are directed at providing "service" to Latinos in general. However, the UFW did not sit idly by as the *Times'* pieces were published; they issued a 103-page rebuttal to the series (categorized as a white paper at the UFW website) and insisted that recent significant contracts had been signed in roses, strawberries, and mushrooms.¹⁰³

While the UFW posts assertions of recent collective bargaining agreements, it seems very soon after landmark successes that the union encountered a deterioration of the organization. The most prominent current sociological analysis on the UFW by Marshall Ganz (2000) is essential but it does not attempt to offer explanation of social movement decline—nor is that Ganz' purpose. In this chapter, I propose why it matters to do so and describe the myriad causes of the decline.

DISABLED MOBILIZATION

Explanation of social movement dissolution and unraveled internal ties is seldom in the foreground of collective action studies. This is apparent in examination of collective

¹⁰³ See the UFW website (www.ufw.org) and thereafter the "White Papers" section linked under "Research" to locate the report titled "The Los Angeles Times Series on the United Farm Workers: A Disservice to Reades and the Farm Worker Movement."

action centered on the liberation of racial groups. That is, often the research problem is one of locating how and why the mobilization of racial and ethnic minorities has attained success but ignores the ensuing decline and thus avoids an unhappy ending.

Additionally, race and ethnicity as independent variables, are disregarded in favor of analytical concepts devoid of identity formation and dynamics. Indeed much of the social movement literature in the last two decades concentrates on a manifold conceptualization of framing (see Snow et al. 1986 for where much of this began). This process has been helpful but displays shortcoming in regards to race analysis and to social movements as well.

In an argument for the inclusion of gender in framing analysis, Ferree and Merrill (2000) critique the scholarship for its detachment from sociologically pertinent experiences and identities linked to and defined by gender. They (Ibid.: 456) offer that the inclination to focus upon frames “has developed from social psychological traditions that model cognition as ‘cold,’ using the detached and dispassionate observer as the standard actor.” In doing so, variable individual and group identities such as those rooted in gender consciousness are not extracted but simply ignored. Taking a cue from Ferree and Merrill, I assert that race and ethnicity require incorporation, if not specifically into framing theories, as a necessary component to our understanding of success—as the previous chapter offered—and failure of collective action, which is this chapter’s contribution.

For instance, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994: 56) conceptualize a *racial project* as, in part, “an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.” To move their very well known idea along, I surmise that the farm workers

of California enacted what I term an *antiracist interracial class project*. This simple expansion of Omi and Winant's ideation of racial inequality's source and solution (racist and anti-racist racial projects) enables theorization of how and why two or more racial groups engage in cooperative work toward a common set of goals. But what causes successful antiracist efforts "to reorganize and redistribute resources" to fall on hard times? Why does interracialism become unsustainable? In part, I assert that complex identities clash within the racial project—such as the farm workers movement—so that sustainability of the movement is improbable.

I have cited several farm workers studies throughout the dissertation. However, none that I can observe expends much time and effort to characterize the history and system of race relations within the farm labor force and the farm workers movement. More specifically for my purposes, interracial and interminority cooperation is never posed as a central independent variable that created success. Therefore, the coming apart of a racial group merger, since one is hardly ever recognized in the first place, is never postulated to be the cause of farm worker movement decline. While a focus on the fissures in a racial coalition is key to the chapter, I turn to more general social movement literature for analytical tools on social movement decline. A general approach is the only option in a literature that pays little attention to racial coalitions specifically and to social movement dissolution in broader terms. While I maintain that the breakdown of the coalition was crucial, it only provides partial causal explanation of farm worker movement decline. Indeed there were other causes such as a state apparatus operated by a reactionary, abuse by the Teamsters, and internal ideological disagreements about the inclusion of undocumented immigrants as farm labor union members. But provision of

some explanation of the farm worker movement's outcome *after* its successful period is necessary even if it is analysis of decline. This is true of social movement analysis in general as Marco Guigni (1998: 373) points out that "the study of the effects of social movements has largely been neglected." I propose that decline is one of those effects requiring analysis.

FRAMES AND NETWORK TIES

Florence Passy and Marco Guigni (2000) argue that the symbolic meaning of activism is interlocked with a social movement participant's level of engagement. They investigate why individuals engage with and at some point may withdraw from collective activity. They conclude that withdrawn social activists possess a life-sphere and networks that place less emphasis on social movement engagement and disconnect from co-participants. Like much of the framing literature, Passy and Guigni supply insight on how the singular social actor contributes to collective action; subsequently, they demonstrate why certain individuals pull away. But their insight is delimited to the micro-level. Snow and Benford (2005: 209) explain that frames are necessary to detail how "collective action frames are rooted...in extant ideologies, but are neither determined by nor isomorphic with them." Indeed individuals act but not haphazardly. Further, social movement theorists are increasingly concerned with those individuals' connectedness to social networks.

Florence Passy (2003: 24) illustrates how networks translate "latent or unrealized" energy into social movement "action." Further (Ibid: 24), these networks represent more than mere contacts but are "channels" through which social movement participants move toward engagement with activism. As social actors become embedded in networks,

participants take possession of a reliable conduit through which to act, contact others, and maintain “trust” (Ibid: 41) with other movement members. Pamela Oliver and Daniel J. Myers (2003) are helpful in their attempt to model the relationship between networks and the diffusion of protest activity among individuals. However, omitted from such work by Passy and Oliver & Myers are explanations of negative case scenarios. The sociology of social movements is strengthened with explanations of what occurs in moments of channel blockage, omission of some group’s identity within the movement, or the dislocation of movement participants’ embedded condition within networks. What are some possible causes of the weakening of a social movement organization (SMO)?

In his study on the Black freedom struggle, sociologist Kenneth T. Andrews (2004) provides case study analysis of three Mississippi counties and their differing levels of long-term movement activity. Andrews (Ibid: 64) finds that the construction and maintenance of “movement infrastructures turn out to be consequential for the long-term impacts of social movements.” In terms of the UFW’s movement infrastructure, Filipinos proved to be central to the organization’s strength. As they expressed alienation from what was interpreted as a Chicano-centric organization, the infrastructure weakened.

Earlier work from Andrews (2002) investigates countermovement formation, which can defuse activism that threatens the status quo. As for counter movements to which farm laborers were subjected, organizations such as the Teamsters and the state offered proactive countermovement responses to farm worker mobilization. Ironically but I think accurately, the Teamsters, though a labor union, must be regarded as a countervailing force to farm labor unionism. Further, the state, which began to actively

engage in management of farm labor as detailed in Chapter 3, has been shown to demonstrate its own countermovement tendencies (see Gale 1986).

INELIGIBLE “ILLEGALS”

Nearly a decade after the farm workers movement peaked, a “Declaration” was sent out as a proclamation that hoped to reassemble the momentum and spirit of an earlier time.

The declaration’s first point read:

We know that the poverty of the Mexican and Filipino workers in California is the same as that of all farmworkers across the country, the Blacks, poor Whites, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Arabs. We will continue our social movement in fact and not in pronouncements by uniting under the banner [of] our union all farmworkers reardless of race, creed, sex or nationality.¹⁰⁴

Written in 1979, the statement is a scripted repeat of the exhortations disseminated in the 1960s to jumpstart the movement. This type of discourse was often invoked during that time in order to put forth a “multiracial/multicultural” image of the farm workers movement and later the UFW. During an era of heightened levels of activism among groups of color, this multiracial discourse resonated across various movements and movement organizations. That is, the plight of one group of color was inextricably connected to other groups of color or so went the argument. The farm workers movement institutionalized, or at least tried to make it seem so in official discourse, this notion of a united racial and working class front. The declaration noted the “martyrs” who had given their lives for La Causa. As this chapter and the recent experiences of the UFW demonstrate, there would be no massive rejuvenation for the movement.

The first point’s express desire to encompass and represent the racial gamut reflective of the agricultural labor force did not extend to the existent gaps in citizenship

¹⁰⁴ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, “Declaration for the Liberation of the Farm Workers,” August 11, 1979, (Box 7, Folder 18).

status among farm workers. Certainly, the UFW campaigned against Mexican national labor who they argued encroached on their labor market position, no matter whether those workers were in the US legally (such as Braceros) or illegally. Cesar Chavez testified to Congress of what he recognized as the ameliorative effect Braceros and “illegals” had on farm workers’ wages. Yet, this approach from the union leadership did not jibe with union organizers literally working in the fields on union recruitment efforts. One “group of UFW field and boycott organizers in Florida” voiced their displeasure with official policy which not only disallowed undocumented workers’ participation in the union but aggressively sought to remove them from their respective jobs. The Florida organizers refused to engage in the surveillance of undocumented workers. A letter addressed to the “Friends of the UFW,” expressed the Florida contingent’s adversity to a union directive which ordered them to make “reports on the illegals in their areas... We were to note how many and where, who they worked for and who brought them in.” The letter characterizes this sort of effort as tantamount to playing the part of “an arm of the Immigration Service.”¹⁰⁵

The communiqué from Florida further indicates that the UFW had started to do the work of the state: deciding who belonged and who did not. Unfortunately, rather than confront big capital and the state, the union expended precious time and resources on shifting “the blame on to whole communities of people.”¹⁰⁶ Undocumented workers were therefore identified as movement inhibitors not a right wing California government or powerful growers. Significantly, the trend of farm worker activism in the late 1970s reveals *less and not more* confrontation with growers and agribusiness in California. In

¹⁰⁵ Marhsall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter to “Friends of the UFW,” n.d., (Box 7, Folder 31).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 2, the labor strikes of the 1930s were an outright denouncement of powerful landowners. By the 1960s, after landmark achievements with the grape strikes, the union directed their energies against newly real and perceived enemies such as undocumented workers and other labor unions such as the Teamsters.

The UFW insisted that the extraction of “illegals” was indeed an effort to directly engage with big capital. Subsequent to the suspension of the Florida contingent, Mack Lyons, who was seemingly an organizer with some influence in Florida, explained the decision to punish those sympathetic to undocumented workers. However, Lyon’s text reads as a regurgitation of the long-standing Chavez policy though the letter is to Chavez himself. Lyons wrote that

the imported workers are being used by the growers against us and our efforts to organize and build bargaining power. We also know that our real enemy is the grower and all of the tools that his wealth and power can buy—including Border Patrol indifference to the importation of illegal strikebreakers.¹⁰⁷

Again, the state is deemed the pawn of powerful capitalists—“Border Patrol indifference” is a buy off from the growers. This characterization of undocumented labor echoes the very sentiment that Chavez had in his description of Bracero workers in Chapter 3. These workers, almost all Mexican nationals, drove down wages and increased levels of violence around strike activity.

As the union embarked on lettuce strikes during the late 1970s in the Salinas and Imperial Valleys, California Assemblyman Richard Alatorre, a Mexican American, proposed a bill and attempted to push it through the Assembly’s Criminal Justice Committee. The bill’s apparent intent was to expand legislation, which codified strikebreaking as an illegal activity. The Alatorre proposition would bar strikebreakers

¹⁰⁷ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Cesar Chavez from Mack Lyons, August 9, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 31).

who originated from outside of California—an obvious allusion to workers from Mexico. On the heels of some violent outbreaks in Salinas, Alatorre insisted that “Anytime you import strikebreakers there is a great potential for violence. We’re trying to do way [with] the practice of strikebreaking.”¹⁰⁸ The Assemblyman’s effort to nudge the bill through a legislative committee was in concert with the UFW agenda that defined undocumented workers as adverse to farm worker wages and successful strike actions. Moreover, these efforts attributed violence and supposedly any kind of strikebreaking to be a direct effect of undocumented workers.¹⁰⁹

This conception of Mexican national laborers as threats to the well-being of farm workers had deep roots dating back to the days in which farm worker activists voiced deep opposition to the Bracero Program. Invoking this sentiment into UFW policy, the union valorized Mexican workers as a threat to the survival and success of Mexican Americans. The state agreed. In 1971, a California Department of Labor official, Joseph Flores, insisted “that the group harmed most by the illegal work force in this area is the Mexican American community.”¹¹⁰ The movement to exclude workers from Mexico as put forth by the Alatorre proposition coupled with the UFW’s own anti Mexican worker sentiment exposes the intra-Mexican origin divisions along lines of national origins. The union frequently invoked farm worker struggle as constituting part of the broader struggle of the American worker. Asserting their rights as hard working laborers was one matter but the Mexican nationals were “*personas non grata*.” Workers from outside of the US

¹⁰⁸ “Bill to Tighten Strikerbreaker Law Gains” *Los Angeles Times* August 23, 197, p. B28.

¹⁰⁹ The animosity toward workers from Mexico most certainly did not originate with the farm workers movement. This anti-Mexican bigotry existed beforehand and continues today. One need only observe current discourse in the US on issues of immigration and Mexicans in the country—they are blamed for everything from lowering wages to lacking the capacity and moral fortitude to be “Americans” to being violent gang members or terrorist threats.

¹¹⁰ “Job Peril Posed by Illegal Aliens in State” *Los Angeles Times* June 20, 1971 p. B.

not only corrupted the movement's efforts and lowered wages, they inhibited this initiative to bring farm workers under the rubric of being Mexican Americans who were simply American workers that clearly belonged.

Though wary, if not downright hostile to workers from Mexico, the UFW oscillated in its attitude toward the workers from south of the border. As Chavez persisted that Mexican nationals were owner-controlled peons used as strikebreakers, he also voiced criticism of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) failure to stop illegal border crossings. One Border Patrol official described UFW policy on Mexican workers as operating "like a yo-yo." The official contended that the UFW excused "illegal aliens" in times of "labor peace" but "lambastes the Border Patrol during a strike for failing to round up such workers." The union departed from the official's assessment of union practices and stated that Mexican workers could join the union.¹¹¹

Thus, Mexican workers were to be initially regarded as strikebreakers until their acquiescence to union membership. But for undocumented laborers, aligning themselves with a well known, infamous (in many cases), and controversial organization was a dangerous decision. The UFW drew strict lines around Mexican origin workers: Mexican American workers could be strikebreakers (the union would find it disagreeable but they could not threaten them with deportation) but undocumented workers who did scab work were under threat of deportation. Certainly, the union preferred that these workers be deported at the bequest of the UFW. Such a constrictive categorization of undocumented workers and by implication of Mexican origin identity would not bode well for the organization. Scholars on Mexican American history such as George J. Sanchez (1994) and David G. Gutiérrez (1995) illustrate the complexities and struggles

¹¹¹ "Lettuce Strike Focus Now in Salinas" *Los Angeles Times* August 26, 1979 p. A3.

of “becoming” a hyphenated Mexican-American and the ambiguities and intra-group diversity that exists among Mexican origin people in the US.

The previously noted Mr. Lyons from Florida expressed condescension for the Florida contingent that had infamously espoused support for the undocumented laborers. Lyons clarifies union policy with some sense of hopefulness that he is actually correct in his clarification. In his note to Chavez, he determines that support for the UFW and for inclusion of undocumented workers are mutually exclusive pursuits; thus the undocumented cannot be categorized as labor union eligible because they are not “Mexican American eligible.” To fuse Mexican Americans and undocumented Mexican workers was interpreted to “be hypocritical at worst and ineffective [sic] at best.”¹¹² Two years previous, the union opposed a proposal from the presidential administration of Jimmy Carter that would criminalize the act of knowingly hiring undocumented employees. As they supported “amnesty for illegals with no apparent time limitations,” the union would not agree to a proposed statute that would bar growers from hiring undocumented workers—in their estimation this would engender racial profiling. The argument went that with the implementation of the new “illegal alien plan,” there would be a promotion of “wholesale discrimination in employment against all workers who have dark skin and speak languages other than English.”¹¹³ The union would therefore take a wait and see approach. Their strategy was to first build a union for citizen workers and thereafter seek to include the undocumented in that union. That is, assimilate Mexican national workers when the union had cemented the rights of those workers who possessed citizenship.

¹¹² Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Cesar Chavez from Mack Lyons, August 9, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 31)

¹¹³ “UFW Denounces Carter Program on Illegal Aliens” *Los Angeles Times* August 28, 1977 p.A3

Lyons' letter reiterates this point by deducing that the Florida contingent's strategy of recruiting illegal workers was a strategy couched in naïveté. Lyons reckoned that "it may be difficult for some of the staff to understand that we don't have the resources or the power yet to win the necessary civil rights of the workers who are imported from Jamaica or Mexico¹¹⁴ (illegally or under a legal fiction) because we are still struggling desperately to establish our own rights."¹¹⁵ Therefore, the union's survey of the labor and capital "geography" was shortsighted. Illegal workers from Mexico were regarded as people worthy of having amnesty but should not be allowed to work in the fields—the very industry and labor sector, which a substantial number of Mexican workers had occupied since 1910.

Lyons concludes by assessing that indeed the movement's main tormentors were the usual suspects such as "growers...The Teamsters...The Farm Bureau...the government, as an agent of the growers." However, danger seemed to approach from all sides as Lyons suspected that "some people from our staff of volunteers...whose idealism lacks the tempering of a large dose of reality"¹¹⁶ also posed a serious challenge to successful mobilization. While these varying groups could be described as coming at the union from various angles, I propose that Lyons' formidable list demonstrates how threats emanated from inside and outside of the UFW organization—both from within the union (naïve supporters) and outside of it (The Teamsters—yet still within the labor union world).

¹¹⁴ The reference to Jamaicans is a note of Black workers brought from the West Indies to labor in Florida sugar cane fields.

¹¹⁵ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Cesar Chavez from Mack Lyons, August 9, 1974 (Box 7, Folder 31).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Additionally, the split of Mexican origin workers along the lines of citizen and illegal workers (or as anti-citizens as described in Chapter 3) proved to be disconcerting for some parties. Based in Texas with Todos Unidos-Centro de Accion Social Autonomo [Everyone United-Center for Socially Autonomous Action], Ramon Mata, the group's president, denounced UFW activity, which scapegoated undocumented workers. Nevertheless, Mata calls out for dialogue with Chavez over the matter and pledges his full support "regardless of what action you and *la migra* [the INS/Border Patrol] may take against *our brothers*" (emphasis added). Significantly, while the UFW cited "illegals" as tools of the growers to combat wage increases and strike activity, President Mata attributes the anti-undocumented activity to a takeover of the UFW "by opportunistic reactionaries who dominate other 'labor unions'."¹¹⁷ Mata's letter illustrates another survey of the landscape of power relations within the agricultural industry and the farm workers movement. He notes the broader labor union power structure, perhaps embodied by Reuther and the UAW. Furthermore, Mata's letter of protest signifies the cracks in racial and ethnic identity among Mexican/Mexican Americans and Chicanos.

In order to stave off powerful agribusiness and opposing forces within "the house of labor," the UFW was successful in seeing to it that the state of California create a labor adjudication system represented by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB). The ALRB was to be the referee, so to speak, in regards to which unions could represent workers and oversee the process of labor union elections. At the time of the ALRB's inception in August 1975, the UFW and the Teamsters had waged battle with each other

¹¹⁷ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Ramon Mata to Cesar Chavez, August 6, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 31).

as to which union would be the rightful representative of farm workers. But growers, deeming the ALRB an offshoot of the UFW, would not relent so easily. Little more than a week after the founding of the ALRB, a major grower outfit, the Western Growers (WG), procured a restraining order that would prevent Board representatives from overseeing union elections on their membership's farms and ranches.¹¹⁸ The WG argued that a master contract would be an allowable vote. In other words, rather than divvying up their membership's workforces at various properties into individual voting units which would cause mini-competitions between the UFW and the Teamsters, the WG and, interestingly the Teamsters, advocated for a "multiemployer" agreement in which the vote from all WG ranches would be tallied up and decide which union would represent workers at all WG units. That is, winner takes all. It seemed that the WG and the Teamsters were on the same page—a point of suspicion for the UFW.

Two years earlier in May 1973, as landmark contracts signed with grape farmers arrived at their expiration dates, the Teamsters had considerable success in supplanting the UFW among farm workers. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that "growers make no secret of their preference for the Teamsters Union, say they regard the [UFW] as too inexperienced and radical to negotiate or maintain a regular union contract."¹¹⁹ However, Chavez portrayed the UFW/Teamsters battle as a window of opportunity for the farm workers union. He argued that, as opposed to the years between 1965 and 1970 when the union strategy consisted of strikes and secondary boycotts, the UFW could embark on a "real strike for the first time."¹²⁰ Tellingly, Chavez was clear on what had occurred in the 1960s—secondary boycotts, which were controversial as they were not legitimated as

¹¹⁸ "First Farm Vote Under New State Law Scheduled" *Los Angeles Times* September 6, 1975 p.B1.

¹¹⁹ "AFL-CIO Will Give \$1.6 Million to Fight Teamsters" *Los Angeles Times* May 10, 1973 p.A1.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

“true” labor union tactics, had been essential to the success. Additionally, Chavez recognized the importance of cross-racial cooperation in fomenting success—a point that will be covered later. But as the Teamsters challenged the UFW in the 1970s, Chavez asserted that this was an opportunity to become a “real” labor union.

Chavez deemed strike action necessary because of Teamster efforts to become farm labor representatives—there was a recognition the UFW was in a weakened condition. But it should also be pointed that farm workers were simply an easy target—difficult to mobilize but also easy to take advantage of as their constituency relied on seasonal employment and shifted from place to place in order to work. Indeed, the tense situation between the UFW and the Teamsters reflects the subjugated and downgraded status of farm workers. Passed legislation that engendered the ALRB was intended to solve the problem of fair union votes and labor union access for farm workers. The protective cover of a state-mandated agency was supposed to be the salve for the UFW and their struggles. However, social movements, particularly if led by people of color, will often produce counter-movements. Opposition from the WG and from the Teamsters is indicative of these kinds of counter-mobilization mechanisms. The Teamsters seemed to be a particularly debilitating obstacle—it is one matter for the counter-movement to be big capital and it is another for that opposition to emanate from within the labor union structure.

Furthermore, the forces of racism and intra-minority (Filipino/Mexican) divisions also proved to be roadblocks to successful mobilization maintenance. Chavez, in an April 1973 newspaper article, “alleged that part of the reason for the alliance of the Teamsters and growers is their ‘racist’ attitude.” Chavez’s accusations formed a response

to a high-ranking Teamsters official who stated that “as [agricultural] jobs become more attractive to Whites, then we can build a union that can have structure and that can negotiate.”¹²¹ Therefore, the long history of anti-Mexican racism and the racialization of Mexican workers as dim-witted persisted. Per the usual racist discourse, the Teamsters official ascribed to Mexicans a deficient capacity to be “good” labor union members and existing outside of the industrial working class masses that belonged to upstanding, all-white labor unions. Even when Mexican workers did participate in labor activism, which they had a long history of doing by the 1960s, they were deemed gullible captives of left wing extremists—that is, never to be trusted since Mexicans were either incompetent or easily susceptible.

As they commenced to quell the encroachment of the Teamsters on the sites of their greatest victory, Chavez maintained that prospects were good for the UFW. In 1974, the UFW leader insisted at a union Executive Board Meeting that “The Teamsters did not hold any ground anywhere” (obviously untrue) and that further “they [The Teamsters] have to do in one year what it has taken us 10-11 years to do.”¹²² The sense of optimism that the Teamsters would be unable to match the deftness and strength level that UFW put forth in its great successes would not bear out. Indeed, if the decade long struggle that Chavez alludes to had developed such a strong infrastructure, then why were the Teamsters able to move into UFW territory? One possible explanation is that the UFW simply could not sustain stamina among such an impoverished labor force to strike once again. Additionally, the UFW required substantial amounts of cash to fund its operations. In the same meeting, President Chavez predicted the union would spend

¹²¹ “Role of Farm Workers in Teamsters ‘Stalled’” *Los Angeles Times* April 28, 1973 p.A1.

¹²² Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, UFW National Executive Board Meeting Transcript (p.42), October 14, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 30).

nearly \$750,000 on strikes by October 1974. The expulsion of such substantial sums of money would perhaps fall into the growers' strategy to "drain us [the UFW] dry."¹²³

Moreover, other forms of support were running dry as well. In particular, the reservoir of interracial cooperation between workers in the union was in a state of dissolution. Meanwhile, Chavez cited Filipino workers as indispensable to the mobilization efforts in grapes. However, other crops represented greener pastures for the UFW since they were composed of a mostly Mexican labor force and thus more amenable to a Mexican-centric labor union. The struggle in the grape fields, if Filipinos deserted the UFW for the Teamsters, was a lost cause. But why would desertion occur? One reason was Filipino alienation from the union after the initial victories in which both Filipinos and Mexicans had played key roles. In the previously cited Executive Board meeting, Chavez opined "if we could get all the Filipinos to join us, we could win [in grapes]."¹²⁴ He argued for, in effect, leaving behind Delano and the grape vineyards and, in so many words, Filipino participation in the UFW. The union's new direction, as noted in the earlier parts of this chapter, led them to the bountiful lettuce crops around Salinas in the north and the Imperial Valley in the south. Therefore, quite remarkably, in 1974, the UFW leadership recognized the very place in which success was achieved as "the hardest place to strike" and that "a new place is easiest to organize."¹²⁵

In the same year, many Filipinos began their departure from the confines of the UFW. If not resorting to outright withdrawal from the union, some Filipinos posted complaints about treatment of their small but significant presence. As part of the program of moving to more opportune sites for organizing, the union actively sought

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

areas where they might find success. One union report commented that the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas and regions of Washington State offered potential regions in which to organize farm workers. The same report also mentioned citrus strikes in Arizona, to which the UFW had sent representatives. While it is not entirely clear what the role of the UFW was in these strikes, it is clear that either there was direct sponsorship of these strikes or at least an offer of moral support. Also quite important were the lettuce crops of Arizona—along with the lettuce industry and its workforce in California. UFW leadership had ascertained that the industry held some promise for future prospects.¹²⁶

Ever cognizant of the Teamsters presence in the Arizona lettuce fields, the UFW received a report from Chris Braga, who was assigned to three Filipino lettuce camps in Bodine, Woods, and Cactus. As he embarked on his mission to organize workers in Arizona, Braga sent back word to union headquarters that the “older men were very stubborn and some were hostile.” Overall, there were a host of grievances, which the Filipino laborers lodged against the UFW. These workers’ “major complaint against the UFW centered around the hiring hall, the seniority system, and the dispatch. Other complaints were about being called names, having rocks thrown at them and their cars [sic] getting messed up while working a ‘struck field.’ A few guys wanted to know why Larry Itliong had left the UFW.” The objections from the Filipino lettuce workers were varied, but Braga concludes that “more organizing” was necessary particularly among younger Filipino workers. His final assessment is simplistic as he determines that less organizable manongs “were all in their 60s [sic]. In 10 years they will have disappeared

¹²⁶ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, “Report of the President to the National Executive Board,” December 16-23, 1974, (Box 8, Folder 2).

from the labor force.”¹²⁷ Braga envisions a future when Filipino workers would not matter any longer to the farm workers union. However, considering his post among Filipino lettuce workers in Arizona, these workers were estimated as crucial to farm workers just as they had been in the grape strikes of the Coachella Valley. Furthermore, if the Teamsters were moving in these circles, then the UFW reckoned that their own organizing strategy would have to include Filipinos as well.

Back in California, the union had expended energy and resources to aid the elderly manongs as they retired and required housing, food, and health care. In the early 1970s, the union founded a retirement home for aged manongs known as Paulo Agbayani Village. In October 1974, applications to reside in the Village from manong were submitted to the union. An overview of initial applicants demonstrates the dire circumstances, which the elderly Filipinos found themselves in the final years of their lives.

The most flush member of these applicants was George Ebale, seventy-four years old at the time. Mister Ebale subsisted on a monthly stipend of \$270.90 before expenses were deducted. In contrast, Mister Ruben Geroche, sixty-four years old, survived on \$106 per month before the subtraction of monthly living expenses. However, Mister Geroche and Mister Ebale were unique from half of their Filipino applicants to Agbayani Village. Twelve of the applicants, even in retirement, sent significant portions of their retirement income back home to the Philippines. In fact, the reports states that many of these manongs maintained “dreams of going back to the Philippine and getting

¹²⁷ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, “Report to the Board of Directors” from Chris Braga (Filipino Lettuce Workers), December 12, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 26).

married.”¹²⁸ These transnational connections—desiring to return to a place that one left long ago—are in stark contrast to the Chicano and Mexican identity which Mexican origin workers constructed for themselves. Additionally, the relationship seemed one-sided. For example, correspondence from Filipino participants in the union may offer salutations such as “Viva La Causa” [Long Live the Cause] or “Viva La Huelga” [Long Live the Strike]. That is, Filipinos had to, at some level, partake of Chicano/Mexican identity by invoking these phrases. But Mexican workers need not familiarize themselves with the substance of Filipino identity and the Filipino struggle. Filipino ethnic identity and its roots in the union received cursory attention and little reinforcement from UFW “cultural” practices.

This concern was not simply about advertising or “showing off” the farm workers movement’s Filipino roots. Even at union meetings, Filipino workers had been displaced and sometimes ignored. In his biography, Philip Vera Cruz testifies to the fact that many union meetings were held in Spanish and English—languages that manongs either could not speak or spoke at levels of intermediate competency.¹²⁹ Unfortunately, at a practical level, Filipinos were being cut out by union practices by 1974. The report on Agbayani Village details progress on building of the retirement home. However, the report’s final take is that the manongs were in a state of anxiety about committing to a life in the complex until it was complete. One reason for this anxious state of existence was that manongs could not be informed of what their monthly rent bill would amount to.

Taking this into account along with Chavez’s comments on Filipinos and the lost cause of grapes, uncertainly in regards to the Village, and linguistic exclusion from some

¹²⁸ Marshall Ganz Papers, “Agbayani Village Social Organizing Report to Board of Directors” by Chris Braga, October 1974, (Box 7, Folder 30).

¹²⁹ See Scharlin and Villanueva (2000)

meetings, it is clear that the UFW, consciously or unconsciously, forged a union that would only serve Mexican workers. The momentous merger, which occurred in 1965, was set to unravel by 1974 and the UFW leadership and organizers in the field were helping that process along. In fact, Chavez, who had founded the NFWA in 1962 and whose initial effort was to offer farm workers a modest burial benefit, argued that services should *not* be a primary goal of the union any longer in 1976. He indicated that the UFW was “too concerned with servicing people...we need to cut down on them or close them if they aren’t helping to organize workers.”¹³⁰

However, the merger and coalition between Filipinos and Mexican had been a tenuous one at best. As noted in preceding chapters, both groups considered their interests to be distinct and were in competition for agricultural jobs. Chapter 4 demonstrated how the coalition came into being and that assessments of the merger’s authenticity was dubious. As Chavez called for the cutback in services to farm workers, the union continued with an uncertain approach to Filipinos. In 1974, the union leadership moved away from Filipino workers—ascribing them as more sympathetic to the Teamsters or as the Braga report indicated—too old to be organized into the union fold. But in 1976, the grape crops reemerged into the good graces of the union and were judged to be a potential site of rejuvenation for the flagging movement. One internal report showed that at the crop’s peak season, 40,000 workers labored in grapes—the third largest group of farm workers after those employed in “tree fruits & nuts” and “lettuce & mixed vegetables.” Obviously, this represented a formidable set of potentially (re)organizable workers. The report includes an assessment that “we could afford to

¹³⁰ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, “Special Organizing Meeting,” November 24, 1976, (Box 1, Folder 26).

concentrate on and organize well [on] grapes, vegetables, and if this doesn't drain our energy, go into the citrus."¹³¹ Again, Delano could become the focal point of UFW efforts but how would Filipinos workers fit into such an endeavor in 1976?

Twenty-one months prior to the submission of the 1976 reports, prominent Filipinos in the union entered into debate and disagreement in regards to how they, as a unit, had been treated within the UFW. Peter Velasco, Third Vice-President of the union (only three were in place) and at the time working on the union's Baltimore boycott staff, fired off a letter to Philip Vera Cruz, another Filipino Vice-President of the union.¹³² Velasco lays a harsh scolding on Vera Cruz for speaking against Cesar Chavez. Unhappy with some decisions made in connection to Agbayani Village, Vera Cruz had apparently criticized Chavez. Velasco reminds Vera Cruz that it was he who had introduced Chavez at "Village dedication ceremonies" as "one of the greatest labor leaders in the country." Velasco essentially claims that it was Chavez who had transformed Vera Cruz into a labor organizer. Moreover, and in the strongest of tones, Velasco portrays his fellow manong as "man of words...But never in action...if you pursued your words when you speak, we [presumable Filipinos] don't need Cesar."¹³³

Vera Cruz, according to his biography, had envisioned the UFW as an extension, rather than an end unto itself, of a broader movement advocating socialist ideals. To his chagrin, the UFW had morphed into the only representative of the farm workers movement. It had grown to encapsulate all the concerns and politics of farm labor in

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² I will not cite extensively from materials penned by Peter Velasco. Many of his materials are not as of yet processed and organized in the archives at the Walter Reuther Library. However, I was able to survey and evaluate many of these unprocessed documents and they clearly demonstrate Vealasco's loyalty to Cesar Chavez.

¹³³ Marshall Ganz Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Pete Velasco to Philip Vera Cruz, August 19, 1974, (Box 7, Folder 32).

California. For one such as Vera Cruz, the farm workers movement was to be a component of a larger progression toward social justice for workers and the oppressed. Therefore, in his purview, a broader socialist movement should draw under its umbrella the UFW but not vice versa. However, Filipino dissatisfaction and internal critiques of Chavez and the increasingly Mexican-centric union had roots that went deeper than the terse exchange between Velasco and Vera Cruz. Filipino and Mexican tension after the merger is synthesized in the UFW career and departure of Larry Itliong—the Filipino organizer who held membership with the union since its inception.

Itliong, as detailed in several histories of the UFW, was integral to the success of the strikes, which occurred in the Delano grape vineyards. Rooted in the AWOC and with a background in trade unionism, he proved to be indispensable to the movement and was arguably the most important Filipino organizer. Still, Itliong was more likely to clash with UFW leadership though he himself became a Vice-President of the union. While an advocate for and a participant in the union, Itliong viewed his involvement and role in the farm workers movement as a voice for Filipinos. This strong sense of commitment and Filipino ethnic consciousness is manifest throughout much of the available primary data written by and to Itliong. Indeed the farm workers movement chiseled out a pathway of opportunity for Filipinos to take political, social, and economic action on behalf of themselves. This had been the pattern of Filipino political activism since the 1930s—they voiced their demand for equality by forming farm labor unions.

Itliong's notes, letters, and other bits of correspondence, after his resignation in October 1971, demonstrate the frequent frustration in giving voice to Filipino concerns and needs. This broader, and perhaps primary, agenda that could not be expressed by the

UFW is evident in a note from Itliong to a friend a few weeks after his departure. Itliong wrote:

As for your problem in making our Pinoy cabayans [sic] to see the light of the importance [sic] of our involvement [sic] in the political system of our Country the good USA, I can very well understand. I did face the same kind of problem when [sic] I started organizing farm workers extensively beginning [in] 1960.¹³⁴

The letter continues on to list out various initiatives which Itliong had devoted his time to such as the problems of Filipino immigrants and job placement. By why is it that programs such as these could not become part and parcel of a farm workers union? One answer is touched upon in previously cited comments from Chavez in which he argues that the UFW need not provide services to the union membership. This moved the union toward having one of two mutually exclusive choices as to which direction the union could pursue.

One option was to cut back on services—to change what constituted the original mission of the UFW—to procure equality and social justice for farm workers. Achievement of this goal would require much more than simply striking labor deals with big capital. Indeed, services, beyond bargaining contracts and setting up labor shops in the fields, were necessary for farm workers. The other option was to continue with the work of providing services to farm workers in general while also attempting to convene those workers under the protective cover of a labor union.

In particular, for Itliong, Filipinos represented a group of people who required these kinds of services such as the retirement home of Agbayani Village. Services and attention to the various concerns and needs of farm workers had to be included with the goal of labor justice. This was especially important for Filipinos, as they were an older

¹³⁴ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Rick from Larry Itliong, December 6, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 4).

and more destitute group among the workers. A letter to Itliong, while he was still employed by the UFW, exhibited the dubious feeling that the UFW or any other organization could carry water with Filipinos. The letter write, Nick Delara, pronounced “there is no movement which our people [Filipinos] can relate to. We have...no movement. The truth [sic] of the matter is that the Delano issue is too far reached for our people to relate to at this time.”¹³⁵

Taking together the perspective of Filipino leaders such as Vera Cruz and Itliong and activists such as Delara, clearly these individuals were perceptive of the momentous and small bits of change that were necessary for Filipinos. A truly comprehensive social movement would need to be inclusive of a host of concerns and needs for a deprived population. These activists desired a broad, all-encompassing movement that would deliver the little services that a deprived group required and operated from a socialist base, which would endeavor to alter the social system so that poor people, such as farm workers, could be provided with necessary resources. Indeed, they envisioned a successful end result as one in which an apparatus which produced and maintained social equality was in place for Filipinos.

For Itliong, the UFW was not the venue or perhaps an inadequate conduit to funnel those services and represent a productive and egalitarian social movement structure. Interestingly, Itliong and Delara did not necessarily maintain that the UFW abused or ignored Filipinos (although Itliong would after his departure); they had a self-critique of the Filipino community as well. Itliong contended that “our people are...know it all type...jealous with each other” and “are great for destructive [sic]

¹³⁵ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Nick Delara to Larry Itliong, February 17, 1970, (Box 1, Folder 4).

criticism.”¹³⁶ Delara echoed these feelings and denoted the lack of “emotion or profoundness within our ranks...Our fight is no different from the fight of the Chicano, yet, we have no real zeal in the approach.”¹³⁷ But in fact, the “fight” did seem different for each group—the merger of the AWOC and the NFWA was, in part, so significant because it recognized that the divisions between Chicano and Filipino workers needed to be bridged. Their struggles were “different” and would turn out differently for each.

For Chavez and the Mexican membership, there was no need to chisel out a place for Mexicans “at the table” within the union. But as a distinct but smaller racial/ethnic group within the UFW Itliong concluded in 1971 that Filipinos “are not getting a fair shake...I think I could fight and protect our rights by getting out and speak on our problems.”¹³⁸ Remaining mindful of Chavez’s suggestion to scale back services for the union membership—an action that could be adduced as the intentional marginalization or “doing away” with the union’s Filipino contingent—perhaps Itliong was responding to a new direction which excluded Filipinos. Thus, Filipinos may never have been overtly forced out of the union, but simply ignored and their interests phased out as the union moved on to organizing efforts that excluded Filipinos *and* undocumented Mexican workers. Indeed, the UFW had slowly built itself into a union that was to be for Mexican Americans only.

The composition and portrayal of the union as one for Mexican American workers was obviously rooted in a long process. Indeed, Itliong had made attempts to resign prior

¹³⁶ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Rick from Larry Itliong, December 6, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 4).

¹³⁷ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter to Larry Itliong from Nick Delara, February 17, 1970, (Box 1, Folder 4).

¹³⁸ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, flyer from Larry Itliong: “TO MY KABAYANS,” December 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12).

to 1971. In September 1967, Itliong informed Chavez that “I do not have anything more I could contribute to help the Union.”¹³⁹ There is no mention in the letter, which was either withdrawn by Itliong, never sent, and/or rejected by Chavez since Itliong would continue working with the union, of the Filipino plight and role within the UFW. However, in the 1971 resignation note, Itliong simply bids Chavez adieu and quits “for the sake of the farm workers.”¹⁴⁰ However, these communications between Chavez and Itliong are along the lines of official communiqués between high-ranking members of the union membership and it seems as a result precludes any mention of Filipino marginalization. Strikingly though, in messages to his fellow “kabayans,” Itliong’s message is straightforward and complains extensively about the neglect of Filipino concerns.

A letter to Itliong from Bill Berg, over a year after the resignation, indicates “that more Filipinos are leaving the union... The Filipino farm worker—I don’t need to tell you this—were the backbone of the strike... without the Filipino, there would not have been a strike... and the strike... would have never been won.”¹⁴¹ The note asserts the prominent role of Filipinos within the grape strikes of the 1960s. It thus seeks to restore credit due to a group that, by this time, was minimized by union leadership. Still, Itliong maintained his support of the farm workers movement after leaving the UFW. He had become active with the Filipino American Political Association (FAPA) and encouraged the organization to stand behind striking farm workers.¹⁴² Such an approach in his post-

¹³⁹ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Larry Itliong to Cesar Chavez: “Dear Brother Chavez,” September 8, 1967, (Box 1, Folder 12).

¹⁴⁰ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, Itliong resignation, October 15, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12).

¹⁴¹ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Bill Berg to Larry Itliong, December 15, 1972, (Box 1, Folder 12).

¹⁴² Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Larry Itliong to William L. Kircher, December 3, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12).

UFW life points to a desire to back the movement but from a position within an organization that is ethnic-specific in its identity.

Indeed, Filipinos and Mexicans were both rooted in different identities beyond ethnic self-categorization; they were also from distinct generations and, it seems, had different connections to trade union organizing. As Chapter 2 revealed, both Filipinos and Mexicans engaged in labor agitation dating as far back, if not longer, to the 1930s. However, Chapter 4 teased out the essential role of Filipino labor organizing skills and knowledge, which had been brought to the fields of California. For Itliong, he protested that by 1971, the union had been subjected to “the influence on union policy of a group of ‘intellectuals’ who form a ‘brain trust’ around Chavez.” A report from the *Fresno Bee* wrote on how Itliong had organized 1,500 Filipino workers as grape strikes commenced in Delano. Since those strikes in 1965, it was Chavez who had “catapulted” into national stardom while “Itliong remained in the background.”¹⁴³ In fact, Chavez, by training, was no labor union organizer. For him, the organization of farm workers in Delano was a starting point for community development among Mexican Americans. This approach was couched in his own background of organizing in the northern city of San Jose with the Community Services Organization.

Therefore, discord within the union is attributable to not only racial/ethnic tension but to organizational approaches. That is, workers had to be organized to strike and gain contracts, but once the union was formed, this necessitated a solid philosophical approach to administering the UFW. In March 1972, Itliong conveyed to Bill Kircher that “many...Filipinos and Chicanos are very unhappy on how the Union is being operated.” He reiterated his moral and ideological commitment to the union and informed Kircher

¹⁴³ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, *Fresno Bee* article, October 15, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12).

that his message of discontent within the ranks was the doing of a favor. Moreover, Itliong's critique was not steeped in the grievances of Filipino exclusion from the union, but of poor trade union leadership style which Chavez employed. The letter warns that "whether brother Chavez...is aware or not he better start looking into the better administration of his field offices. It is well and good to go all over the place and build Unions for the farmworkers but if you do not take care of what you build then it will tumble down on you."¹⁴⁴ The Itliong criticism elucidates the problem and challenges of mobilization maintenance. That is, after descending from the peak era between 1965 and 1970, how could the UFW maintain what had been created? Soon after Itliong's piece of advice, the union proved unable to renew contracts that had reached points of termination and also lost influence to the Teamsters.

However, what also emerges from Itliong's warning is the tone of an experienced trade union field hand. He had oriented himself in the labor battles of Filipino cannery workers in the Pacific Northwest in earlier decades. He understood that a union had to maintain its base and develop trade union locals throughout that would operate in line with headquarter directives. But what was becoming Chavez's union began to walk a haphazard and convoluted path as it struggled to achieve mobilization maintenance. Though concerned with and cognizant of the UFW's struggles and even if attempting to be helpful, the UFW was not the typical labor union even if it desired to be so.

It would have been quite difficult to develop a traditional, "locals-based" labor union for a labor force that found it necessary to work in seasonal crops that were scattered over a geographical region. Along with the nature of its constituency's work

¹⁴⁴ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from Larry Itliong to William L. Kircher, March 30, 1972, (Box 1, Folder 12).

schedule, the group also had to play the role of civil rights organization for working people of color. Bill Kirchner communicated that George Meaney, AFL-CIO President, was “uncomfortable” with the UFW because its practices (i.e. boycotts) “are different than [sic] the things that unions usually do.” As a traditional trade union man, even Kirchner, along with Itliong, expressed that he was “a little disgusted with some of the practices, but I keep trying to remember that the important thing is for there to be a union for farm workers.”¹⁴⁵ This type of correspondence, expressing doubt and even agony, had a long history between the two men. They had spoken many times about Itliong’s dissatisfaction and Kirchner, in the post-Itliong years, expressed his own ambivalence about the union’s ability to have success.¹⁴⁶

As pressure from within the union increased, the UFW also confronted external distress. Obviously, the Teamsters formed a portion of these external adversarial forces as they usurped the UFW’s position as the collective bargaining agent for some farm workers. Thus, the combination of external and internal pressure moved the union toward, if not implosion, a slow and deteriorative decline. The union did not rely on the usual or typical tactics that enabled labor movement success. Most notably, they utilized secondary practices such as boycotts to secure labor victories. For the labor union power structure, the state, and big capital, boycotts were an unacceptable practice. Labor union practices of strikes, walkouts, berating of scab workers had all become, if not accepted, expected parts of the labor union repertoire. But boycotts especially by supposedly leftist, radical farm workers of color moved outside of practices deemed allowable.

¹⁴⁵ Larry Itliong Papers, Reuther Library, letter from William L. Kircher to Larry Itliong, March 21, 1972, (Box 1, Folder 12).

¹⁴⁶ In his response to Itliong’s resignation [Larry Itliong Papers, letter from Kircher to Itliong, November 15, 1971, (Box 1, Folder 12)], Kircher states “that on at least four or five occasions over the past three years” both men had discussed and Kircher argued against an Itliong resignation.

Indeed, labor union leaders such as Meaney, Kirchner, Itliong and Chavez counted on ultimately making a deal with a profitable agribusiness industry. They could not work against the idea of making money; at some point, concessions had to be made and those concessions had to be drawn from agribusiness profit margins. What the UFW had done, via the boycott strategy, was to work against this motive of profit, to appeal to consumers to resist certain products. However, to depart from boycott tactics was to leave behind a proven means to an end.

In the late 1960s, in the midst of a formidable boycott campaign, the state of California questioned boycott tactics—recognizing perhaps that it was an effective tactic. Reporting to Governor Ronald Reagan, the Agriculture and Services Agency of California (ASA) informed the governor that “the table grape boycott is causing considerable difficulty to the California grape industry.” The report attaches a proposed resolution from the California Board of Agriculture contending that the boycotts constitute “harassment” of the workers by the UFW as the union called for workers to walk off the job. Nevertheless, the “cabinet issue memo” deemed strike action a nonstarter to any negotiations between growers and the workers and argued that boycotts should be defined as an infringement on consumers’ rights—an obvious move to conflate the interests of big capital and consumers as one in the same. Moreover, the memo proposed that farm workers should not take up membership in a union that would be effectively forced on the workers (in the state’s estimation).¹⁴⁷

The Reagan administration’s take on the strikes is, without self-consciousness, ironic in the span of California agriculture’s history of strife between capital and labor.

¹⁴⁷ Ronald Reagan Papers, Reagan Presidential Library, Cabinet Issue Memo, July 17, 1969, Agriculture Services Agency Collection, Series III, (Box A2, Folder 2).

The labor movement headed by the UFW is depicted as an organization, which victimized workers and consumers. However, by the 1960s, the state comprehended that the farm workers movement held some credence with the workers and among some sectors of the general public. In 1968, the ASA noted a proposal to create “an Agriculture Employment Relations Board.” This request had been submitted from landowners as the communiqué indicates that the request “has been forwarded by ‘California Agriculture’ to [US] Senator [George] Murphy. He has agreed to handle this legislation.” Therefore, big capital and the state agreed to pass such “agricultural labor legislation” that would enact an agricultural labor board.¹⁴⁸ While seemingly a step in the right direction for labor, the UFW was not quick to take to the proposal.

Margarita Arce Decierdo (1999) asserts that the UFW’s wariness of the proposed labor board was warranted. Her study (Ibid.: 85) describes how the UFW, in 1968, as the ASA relayed its memo to Governor Reagan, equated the creation of an agricultural labor board with the elimination of “the Union’s right to boycott—the most powerful and effective tool against the growers.” The boycotts had been the primary device among UFW tactics and the boycotts had been artfully orchestrated across the nation. Via boycotts, the union convinced many consumers to refuse DiGiorgio grapes or to drink wine from non-union grapes. Prominent Democratic Party politicians such as Robert F. Kennedy vowed allegiance to the farm worker struggle as the union gained national recognition.

By the early 1970s, the growers ramped up efforts to bring farm workers under the cover of the Wagner Act. Again, in irony, defining agricultural workers as industrial,

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Reagan Papers, Reagan Presidential Library, ASA memo to Governor Ronald Reagan, January 30, 1969, Agriculture Services Agency Collection, Series III, (Box A2, Folder 1).

union-eligible laborers was in the best interest of big capital. All concerned parties played a hand in the contentious battle over the creation of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB)—growers, the UFW, the state government, and the Teamsters. The state and the growers, as the overseers and profiteers of the economy, were in absolute agreement in their opposition to boycotts. Earl Coke, the ASA secretary, expressed concern that boycotts “can have serious effect on the agricultural industry and thus on the economy of the state.”¹⁴⁹ Little regard is ever shown for the condition of the laborers who moved the industry along to such immense profitability.

For the UFW and the Teamsters, the divide existed over ideology and tactics. Decierdo argues that growers possessed a preference for the Teamsters. In agreement with the UFW assessment that the Teamsters were conjoined to the growers, the AFL-CIO funded efforts to stifle inroads the Teamsters made among farm workers. Growers, the UFW, and the Teamsters sponsored bills that contained proposed designs for what would become the ALRB. The UFW advocated for secret ballot elections and access to farms in order to politick with workers. Growers wished to block access while the Teamsters were content with a cordoned off area where workers could meet with union officials. The final compromise enacted a piece of legislation known as the Agricultural Labor Relations Act thus providing the statutory basis for the ALRB.

In tracing out the history and creation of the ALRB, Decierdo delineates how this state-mandated regulatory board for California agricultural labor proved to be another force to operate against farm labor unionism. Ironically, conservative, anti-labor individuals were placed on the ALRB thus making the Board decidedly anti-farm worker

¹⁴⁹ Ronald Reagan Papers, Reagan Presidential Library, Speech by Earl Coke, May 29, 1968, ASA Collection, Series III, (Box A2, Folder 1).

rather than operating to ensure a decent, safe workplace. As they had struggle for decades to make inroads, farm workers seemed to have finagled a sliver of influence on the state but as Decierdo demonstrates this is not the case with the ALRB. Indeed it is a tragic note that portends labor union decline. Further, it suggests that the struggle to sustain a farm labor union is a complicated venture that took the UFW into a game (though it is hardly a game) that was rigged against them.

CONCLUSION

The UFW would continue to flounder. Chavez took on new efforts to infuse energy into the movement: direction of efforts to Texas, a visit to the Philippines to appease some portion of the Filipino membership, a campaign against pesticides and their detrimental effects on farm workers' health. But most significant was Chavez' solidification as the iconic figure of Chicano struggle though there is little evidence that Chavez ever considered himself a Chicano. The union was unable to form a solid, reliable organization able to play the role of farm worker labor union representative. This was due to both internal and external factors as the chapter has sought to demonstrate.

Ultimately, there were perhaps too many obstacles in the form of racial/ethnic identity (Filipinos and Mexicans), debates over citizenship (Mexican vs. Mexican American), antagonistic labor unions (the Teamsters), and an antagonistic state. But is it surprising that any social movement, particularly a poor one, would ultimately deteriorate? Perhaps the answer is "no," but I offer that comprehension of the unraveling of internal ties and the pressure from external forces may be instrumental in comprehending how to create social movement maintenance.

However, social movements in general must contend with unintended consequences. Indeed all the problems that the UFW confronted were probably matters and concerns, which they had not seen coming. Charles Tilly (1999: 599) writes that when social actors (dare we add social movements) engage in activity those actions are subject to “consequences of all social interaction” and they must “pass through powerful, systematic constraints, modifying established patterns instead of striking out alone in an empty causal space. Even revolutions depend heavily for their form and content on the regimes they replace.” Initially, farm workers did not find success in the 1930s but did so in the 1960s. They may have modified “established patterns,” but those modifications did not necessarily bode well down the line, as they did not engage with an “empty causal space.”

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE REMAINS IN THE “POST-RACIAL” ERA

INTRODUCTION

As I write these concluding remarks, Barack Obama has become the first US president of color. For many observers in the various media, they have hailed the ascent of President Obama as an indication of a post-racial era. It is curious and even disheartening that the election of one person of color to executive office would cause some to think that the conflicts and complications of race can now be regarded as resolved issues. I would argue that President Obama’s emergence offers an opportunity not to dispose of race but, in fact, to place it at the center of our considerable problems in the country. That is, the newly elected President is indeed a landmark moment in our racial history, but a sole election, even one as significant as this one, does not address the structural problems of race and racism.

RACE MATTERS AS MUCH AS EVER

Moving toward a more sociological comprehension of racial dynamics in the contemporary USA, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s research has parsed out the various workings of a historically rooted and ever relevant racialized social system in the US. For Bonilla-Silva (1997), racism is only one portion of a set of racialized/racist practices in place. Within the racialized social system of the US, racial groups are placed within materially superior and inferior positions. Along with overt acts of racist discrimination—which is seemingly the only occasion in which racism is acknowledged these days—Bonilla-Silva uncovers covert forms of racism and, perhaps most important, the previously mentioned materially unequal distribution of resources to racial groups—more for Whites and less for everyone else. In order to correct such inequities, a

restructuring of society is necessary. The solution is clear enough: provide historically deprived groups of color with the necessary resources they need to thrive—just wages, health care, child care, top-notch public education, and gainful employment. But how are groups of color to work toward a point in which they have more of these resources and opportunities when they must make the journey beginning with less in the first place?

This dissertation has attempted to illustrate how groups of color mobilize by tracing the ebb and flow of the farm workers movement from the 1930s to the 1980s. A focus on agricultural laborers is significant as it instructs the sociologies of race, inequality, and social movements on how some of the most deprived workers of color succeeded in procuring more resources. Indeed, the following statement is a well-founded one for the study's conclusion: *The farm workers movement was successful, interracial, working class collective action.*

Consequently, I offer an approach to farm workers movement analysis that takes care to be inclusive of the dynamics of race and ethnicity within the movement's history. One question I have not ventured to answer within the dissertation's substantive chapters is why race has been ignored in historical and sociological studies of the movement. One possible response to the query is that class has often taken precedence over race in understanding the causes and effects of stratification. Certainly, this seems to have been the case in farm worker scholarship. Time and again, scholars who focus on the movement offer little on race. This study is proactive in securing focus on the inextricable hinge which links race and class in the perpetuation of inequality for workers of color. To exclude one (race or class) at the expense of the other produces a short sighted view of the sources of stratification, which groups of color must act against.

INTERMINORITY CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

In *The Wages of Whiteness*, David Roediger (1991) critiques previous Marxist work for their prioritizing of class over race; that is, class divisions are too often taken to be the root of racism. Thus, the solution to racial inequality lies in resolving class stratification. Roediger offers that in the development of working class White identity, we witness oppression flowing “from below.” White workers actively constructed anti-Black racism around labor. Working class people would therefore be implicitly, if not explicitly, defined as being White. Thus, class and race are bound to each other, but if the relationship between the two is taut, how can working people of color break through? One way workers of color have done so is to *avoid* disposal of racial identity within social movements.

In *Reworking Race*, Moon-Kie Jung (2006) also illustrates how race and class are held together in a mutually constitutive relationship in interwar Hawaii. While in the case of Roediger’s study, this interdependency fostered racial exclusion, Jung provides a historical sociological portrait of a racially affirmative relationship. That is, race need not be excluded but rather should be affirmatively included in a successful cross-racial movement. Therefore, Filipino and Japanese workers, long before the dawn of pan-ethnic terms such as “Asian American” (see Espiritu 1992), which sought to encompass such a diverse range of groups from Chinese to Japanese and Filipino, forged (see Jung 1999) an interracial labor union that affirmed the social reality of Filipino and Japanese class differences and race consciousness.

Groups, such as mobilized Filipino and Japanese workers in Hawaii and the workers under examination in this study, undergo processes of what I term *identity*

formation and *identification*. The latter process is one in which the powers that be—landowners, the state, the White majority—are able to define groups as they wish. Therefore, Mexicans are deemed dutiful and dumb workhorses of farm labor. Meanwhile, Asian origin workers are characterized as wily, deceitful labor agitators or a sexual threat to White women. The former is a process whereby groups of color wield agency; they are able to exert their power within a racialized social system by relaying to others, such as powerful landowners, what and how they are to be identified. While both processes are simple enough to separate out and define, tension is produced when groups of color aim to move against the powers of *identification* and what could also be understood as White supremacy.

Time and again, this is the predicament that farm workers confronted. The problem presented to Mexican and Asian origin workers was not one in which both groups had to “get over it” and accept each other as partners in struggle. That was, certainly, a productive goal and a necessary one as I have argued. Analysis of the strike waves in the 1930s shows farm worker collective action and attempts to foment interracial labor unionism. However, the structure of racial hierarchies position racial groups of color in such a way that their material interests and relationship vis-à-vis employers and the state are not identical. Filipino and Mexican workers held variant positions as colonial subjects in the case of the former and subservient, docile workers in regards to the latter. Though in an elevated hierarchical position in the 1930s, Japanese tenant farmers are subjected to mass internment in the 1940s. As the state imported Bracero labor in the 1940s and two decades afterward, farm worker organizers faced a tall order.

As the movement takes hold in the 1960s, Filipinos and Mexicans forge interracial labor union success. How did they accomplish such a feat? First, the extant scholarship on farm workers never seems to position interracialism as central to successful farm worker collective action. Second, much of the scholarship examines external, rather than internal, forces which produced landmark collective bargaining agreements. Last, the coming together of Filipinos and Mexicans is regarded as seemingly inevitable—it is deemed a “natural fit” between oppressed groups, which, for whatever reason, never took hold in the previous decades of struggle. Therefore, I focus upon internal, racial dynamics to the movement that facilitated the merger of Filipino and Mexican workers into what would become the UFW. Certainly, external facilitative factors and resources mattered a great deal. I contend that the confluence of forces from without and within aided in social movement victories for farm workers. The study emphasizes how Filipinos and Mexicans bridged the historically rooted and perpetuated chasm of race and class inequality, which separated them within California’s agricultural labor force.

However, the relationship between Mexicans and Filipinos becomes frayed. Indeed, if the merger of Filipinos and Mexicans deserves explanation then so too does the erosion of said merger. Again, the study takes care to note the internal and external causal factors of the union’s demise.

I propose that inter-minority conflict, and its persistence within the farm workers movement, is an outcome of what Claire Jean Kim (1999, 2000) conceptualizes as a triangulated condition of race relations. As noted with introductory comments on Kim’s model, groups are defined as insiders/outsideers and superior/inferior. Consequently,

interactions between groups of color are embedded in a conflictive set of social relations in which some are able to obtain more access to resources as compared to others. Does this mean that racial minorities are in competition with each other? In part, the answer to the question seems to be yes. However, the more significant portion of the answer is that all groups of color are subjected to racism fostered by White supremacy. Throughout, the dissertation demonstrates the sources and consequences of differentiated race and class positions for Asian and Mexican origin workers within California agriculture. Japanese workers were commonly farm operators until internment. As for Filipinos, they were disallowed labor union membership by White unions in the 1930s, made less money than Mexican workers in the 1960s, and became a neglected constituency within the movement in the 1970s. The long historical path upon which these groups traveled and experienced interminority relations within California agriculture—negatively or positively—requires investigation and affords an opportunity to extend the theoretical model of racial triangulation.

The triangulation model exhibits *interminority separateness*. That is, Kim's work is helpful in demonstration of how and why groups of color may have competing interests, still be subjected to White domination, and though holding in common subservient racial positions remain racially unequal in relation to each other. However, the gap between groups of color within a triangulated condition of race relations does not preclude the possibility of closing the chasm. Filipinos and Mexicans are able to bridge the divide and create, for a temporary set of years in the farm workers movement, a state of *interminority cohesion*. Indeed, workers of color struggled to close this gap in the 1930s and were unable to do so. However, the 1960s held promise as internal and

external factors allowed cohesion to occur and thereafter move against White race and class domination in California.

KEY POINTS OF THE STUDY

The dissertation begins in the 1930s, but the farm worker movement's roots in California are traceable back to the late nineteenth century. For example, Stuart Jamieson's *Labor Unionism in California Agriculture*, upon which the dissertation heavily relies, reports that Japanese and Chinese workers walked off their citrus orchard jobs in Orange County during the 1880s. Certainly, such labor agitation, even such short-lived episodes that were not parlayed into a sustained movement, could be deemed as part of the farm workers movement. Yet, they hardly, if ever, appear in the extant literature. The glaring weakness of such an omission is how it excludes Asian origin workers from farm worker history. As the study begins the 1930s—mostly because substantial strike waves take hold of California agriculture—I maintain that previous to that time, and throughout, Asian origin farm workers were central to the movement both in their presence and later absence from the United Farm Workers of America.

Social movement failure, success, and decline are interrelated and thus should not be analyzed in isolation from each other. Unfortunately, the farm workers movement's success in the 1960s and 1970s is seldom understood against the backdrop of failed labor unionization attempts in the 1930s. The study's second chapter aims to deliver analysis of this failure three decades before a period of momentous success. Additionally, it demonstrates how both race and class coextend from the 1930s and thereafter within the farm workers movement.

The chapter provides an explanation of how White supremacy prevented the formation of an interracial farm labor union. Filipino, Japanese and Mexican workers sought labor unionism but landowners, the state, White labor, and a racist general public would not allow such a venture to take hold. Two main conclusions can be drawn from the chapter. First, the three main groups of color that did farm labor worked in the fields but were not perceived by landowners as one in the same; they were not all simply laborers. That is, the Japanese were deemed superior to other groups of color. Second, these groups did not hold the same class position within the California agricultural labor market as the Japanese were represented quite heavily among tenant farmers.

Though the state played a role in quelling some of the strike activity that occurred in the 1930s, it was in the 1940s when the state apparatus became a key operator and even manager of race and labor relations within California agribusiness. Chapter three illustrates how two state-managed programs moved stage center in this decade: the Bracero Program and the internment of Japanese origin people on the West Coast of the US. The extraction of the Japanese from California subtracted a group in an intermediary race and class position from the agricultural industry. Further, it allowed the state to provide a significant addition of Mexican workers to the labor supply.

Two main points arise from the chapter. First, big capital was not all-powerful—at least not any longer as of the 1940s—in directing the affairs of agribusiness. More classical theories of capital and labor supply would proffer that a program such as the Bracero initiative is resultant of capital's power over the state. Thus, the state simply does the bidding of the power elite by providing them with a convenient supply of cheap Mexican workers. However, the chapter points out that the state did not simply carry out

the bidding of powerful agribusiness. It played a central role in managing a guest worker program that was integral to the agricultural industry. However, I also offer that the Bracero program was coterminous with Japanese internment. Indeed, their superior position on the racial and class hierarchy did not offer Japanese tenant farmers protection from racism, particularly a racist state. In fact, the opposite occurred; Japanese were defined as enemies of the state. Last, a key consequence of the subtraction of Japanese workers was the reshaping of the farm labor force in terms of racial identity and/or national origins. Thereafter the three central groups were Filipinos, Mexican Americans, and workers from Mexico.

While the main focus of chapter three is on the state and its role in California agriculture, the shift in racial composition affected how workers would coalesce into a successful interracial labor union in the 1960s. In that decade and into the 1970s, chapter four illustrates how Filipinos and Mexican workers originating from two farm labor organizations would carry out a merger. I demonstrate that this process consisted of far more than mutual recognition from both groups that they were “in the same position.” That is, they did not simply recognize a common class position and “get over” their racial differences. The opening portion of the chapter lays out real income differences between Filipino and Mexican workers. I show that the stratification between these groups, dating back to the 1930s, persisted into later decades.

Moreover, both groups expressed their variant racial identities. These differences in terms of class and race could not be ignored. Unfortunately, the social movement literature, in which much of the sociological analysis of the farm workers movement resides, often ignores the dynamics of racial identity. I demonstrate that indeed race

mattered in this time period and how the creation of the UFW melded Filipinos and Mexicans into a farm labor union that became successful.

The signing of farm labor contracts in the 1970s was path breaking for the history of poor peoples' movements. But sustenance of this success was tragically not possible for farm workers. Other analysts may simply conclude that poor peoples' organizations are not able to hold up under the barrage of pressure and more powerful forces constantly working against them. Certainly, I find this to be the case in chapter five. But if social movement failure and success are important to analyze then post-success decline is significant as well. I offer that explanation of negative outcomes such as social movement deterioration may prove helpful. Most important from the chapter is that following on chapter five's point that the creation of the UFW is hardly ever recognized as a racial merger in the first place, analysts hardly touch upon how Filipinos, once a major force within the movement, suffered displacement.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS: HISTORICAL ROOTS, CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

Taking the study together, there are a few implications for future research on race, social movements, and working people of color. First, the study's theoretical treatment of race, though historically based, should not be restrained to purely historical analyses. Second, as to social movements, there is much more to be carried out specifically on the case of the farm workers movement and attempts to create inter-minority social movements currently. Third, even today the term working class remains configured so as to exclude people of color. Specifically, I have a particular interest in the inclusion of Asian and Mexican origin workers into this category. Indeed, both groups' perpetual foreignness (this is often recognized by scholars as an ascription directed toward Asians, but it seems

pertinent to Latinos as well) seems to preclude them from being identified as working class since they are often foreign-born. Even for native-born, US citizen Asian and Mexican origin people, their bodies are designated with a social meaning, which fosters exclusion.

As the title of this concluding chapter indicates, my assessment of race and ethnic relations in the US is that they necessitate, as much as ever, an astute historical and contemporary scholarly analysis, which intertwine so that the past can inform the present. I anticipate that the theorizing based around historical evidence presented here on race is helpful in explication of contemporary situations as well—and not necessarily situations in which interracial cooperation occurs. For example, recent reports post-Katrina indicate that within the last few years, the racial composition of the New Orleans workforce has evolved into a heavily Latino labor force.¹⁵⁰ How does such a transformation impact the position of the Black population that remains deeply rooted yet perpetually marginalized in the city?

A National Public Radio broadcast on July 14, 2008 expounded on Black/Mexican tension in New Orleans. Mayor Ray Nagin is quoted in the report as asking “How do I make sure that New Orleans is not overrun by Mexican workers?” A Latino employer interviewed in the report offered that African American employees “want the easy way out...they don’t work long hours,” yet maintained that his views were “not a racial thing.” A sociological analysis of the shifting situation in New Orleans would, most likely, consist of ethnographic data. However, some theories on differentiated racial position for Blacks vis-à-vis Latinos (and vice versa) particularly in regards to their competition over jobs would expand some of the ideas and concerns

¹⁵⁰ See the *Los Angeles Times*, “Migrants Find a Gold Rush in New Orleans,” April 4, 2006.

presented in the dissertation. Further, such an analysis would move us away from making simplistic declarations that some US workers will not labor in some types of jobs. Indeed, we must be cognizant of and strive to understand how competition and clashes between groups of color is a distinct form of racial conflict as contrasted to interactions between Whites and people of color.

Additionally, there could be some extension of this type of research to comprehend the need to foster more inter-minority social movements; indeed as the demographics shift within the country then much of this mobilization would need to be carried out by groups of color. Take for example the mass gatherings of Latinos around the country to protest the implementation of oppressive immigration laws in 2006. The country may have been taken aback at the substantial brown-skinned crowds in San Diego, Los Angeles, Chicago and other cities throughout the country. While I have no demographic profile of these crowds, the gatherings seemed overwhelmingly Latino.

A potential area of research here is to understand who participates in these types of events and why—certainly there is social movement research on how and why people participate in certain social movements and gatherings. However, the sociologies of race and social movements should address how and why some racial groups engage in collective action and others do not—and is such collective ventures are able or willing to draw an interracial constituency. Further, we should inquire as to how citizenship affects levels and types of participation. This is particularly pertinent for Latinos and Asians in contemporary US society. For example, Roberto G. Gonzales' (2008) ethnographic studies of undocumented youth in California illustrates that even unauthorized immigrants desire to engage in collective action. Moreover, Gonzales (2007) notes that

Asian origin groups represent 13% of the undocumented immigrant populace in the nation.

Certainly, race is conjoined to the condition of citizenship that propels and restrains Whites and groups of color as they do or do not engage in mobilization. In regards to the immigration rallies, why would non-Latinos be less likely to engage in such gatherings? Why would White Americans, often invoking their pride in immigrant roots, not come to the aid of a new wave of immigrants from Mexico and elsewhere? I suspect that much of that divide is structured along lines of race.

Mary Waters delineates (1990) the symbolic yet deeply held connection that suburban Whites have with their ethnic and immigrant roots. Yet Waters points out that while taking pride in ethnic heritage, White ethnics persistently refuse to allow interracial marriage in their families or dismiss the idea of living in racially mixed neighborhoods. That is, there is room to celebrate ethnicity (food, religious practices, family traditions) but race is a non-starter.

Sociologist Tomas Macias' (2006) complementary work to Waters' study, but not nearly as heralded, reveals that Latinos find it hard to ever escape race. People of color certainly can attain Whiteness (see Twine 2004), but it is no clear and wholly secured space for them. From interviews with third-generation Mexican Americans, a Macias interviewee reports that a co-worker tells them (Macias 2006: 109) "don't feel bad...you know, you don't look Mexican...At a minimum you look Spanish. So, you know, don't worry." Discouragingly, groups of color have plenty to worry about. Whites have ethnic options which Waters' data exemplifies. However, they have a "race option" as well that simultaneously exerts the power of a racially privileged position as they are able to access

a state of racelessness. Conversely, Latinos are almost always expected to “sound” or “look” Mexican or have some deep, innately rooted understanding of Mexican culture. Further, their White coworkers are genuinely surprised to see Mexican origin people in professional positions as one white collar interviewee relays in Macias’ study how he was mistaken for the janitor his first day on the job.

Even if he were that janitor, little room is made for Latinos and other groups of color such as Asians to be defined as working class people. Nor are they seen as sympathetic to working class causes. Jake B. Wilson’s (2008) ethnographic study of recent supermarket strikes in Southern California focuses upon the racist perceptions that striking White workers express in regards to groups of color. Specifically, White workers hold a strong aversion to Asians. The White picketers express resentment toward upper middle class Asian customers that violate the picket line. However, White customers are excused from suffering any penalties when they commit the same violation. If forming wholly interracial (the racial spectrum of White and groups of color) coalitions and social movements is to be possible then those kinds of perceptions need to change. But the reasons those perceptions exist require investigation and sociological explanations as well.

We require, as much as ever, analysis of any interracial movement—even if it fades into decline—that aims to fuse groups together. Such efforts are not only of sociological interest, but I believe may be determinative of what steps we take so as to avoid any semblance of a post-racial future in sociological analysis and in U.S. society.

APPENDIX: HISTORICAL METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY AND IN FARM LABOR MOBILIZATION STUDIES

Drawing from primary documents remains the least employed methodological approach in sociology and for study of the farm workers movement as well. Generally speaking on methods, many in sociology divide methodological approaches into the broad categories of qualitative and quantitative research. Both terms seem inadequate in describing the rich array of methodologies that sociologists draw from to produce empirical analyses. My own estimation of sociological methods is that sometimes, and increasingly so, researchers draw on both in their work. Most sociological methodological practices *generate data* specifically obtained to answer a question. Historical methods lie outside of these data-generating practices. But what must be true about historical sociological work, as with any other type of sociological research, is that the method(s) must be appropriate for the research question.

British sociologist John Goldthorpe (1991) maintains that sociologists have, could, and should be in the business of generating current data to answer questions of sociological import. In what is an articulate essay, though mean-spirited because of its dismissal of the necessity of historical methods for most sociological studies, Goldthorpe warns social scientists to ensure that their methods fit their research problem. His conclusion is that often the historical method is the wrong path to choose for sociological research. Historians are concerned with “relics,” that is old primary documents, as Goldthorpe terms them, and sociologists need not rely on older pieces of data.

To avoid being snatched up into extreme positions, one which orders a movement away from historical methods and another which renders indistinguishable history and sociology (see Abrams 1983), we turn to the process of analysis. That is, development of

research questions, engagement in methods, and analysis of findings are distinct yet interrelated parts of sociological research. In describing the sociological research process as such, there seems to be little difference between history and the social sciences. Indeed, historians have questions, seek to answer them, and draw up theses.

However, for historical sociologists, our findings are couched in theoretical projects. Our findings must inform theoreticians and theory, in general, as to how our historical case is indicative of some process or reality that social actors have confronted. Moreover, there is some application and/or development of models in historical sociology. These models indeed can be tested or applied to other cases. If those models prove helpful in analysis of other time periods, events, or organizations then it can be said that while historical sociologists do not generate data, they most certainly are in the business of theory generation. For my purposes, the dissertation's goal is to complement some of the comparative models of race relations that historians and sociologists have offered recently. Moreover, I aim to add to the small, but hopefully growing, set of historical sociological work on people of color *by* scholars of color.

Moreover, the historical approach in sociology is helpful in mapping out long-term processes of social change, particularly in relation to social movements, and allows for analysis of events and time periods about which no survey research was conducted or living informants are no longer available to be interviewed. Certainly, as Nicky Hart concedes (1994), historical materials are “fragmentary.” However, that is not to infer that they are “dead” documents that reveal little—nor are they “relics” which implies that they are curious, old objects that should be set up as exhibits to simply be observed. This point is particularly important for the farm workers who labored and struggled for justice

in the fields of California. Indeed, invaluable archival collections are seldom utilized in sociological studies of the farm workers movement. Moreover, as we move deeper into the twenty-first century, these documents will be more necessary to study periods of the farm workers movement, which date back to the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

For the most part, the sociology of the farm workers movements is nested in the literature on social movements. J. Craig Jenkins (1985) and Marshall Ganz (2000) have utilized the case of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) to sociologically comprehend the underlying process of social movement success. Other writings on the UFW are exclusively about the UFW and the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these works, while informative, come across as pieces of work done in conjunction with the UFW, at the union's behest, or by a participant-observer journalist. Again, much of this work is celebratory, and often rightfully so, but several of these pieces do not closely analyze events leading up to and following the crest of UFW success. Therefore, historical methods enable a sociological analysis of the long-term development of a farm workers movement in California. Indeed, a historical perspective allows me to demonstrate that the farm workers movement constituted bona fide collective action long before it is often recognized as such in the literature. Moreover, primary source materials offer the only way by which to trace the trajectory of farm worker mobilization and working people of color in the range of years from the 1930s to the 1960s.

For portions of this dissertation subsequent to the 1950s, in-person interviews would have constituted a feasible, though limited because of the passage of four decades since, methodological approach. However, by drawing upon the materials presented in this dissertation, I believe that this study represents one of the first, if not one of the few,

studies of farm worker mobilization that is reliant upon such extensive, *of-the-moment*, primary documents. That is to say that the bulk of work on the farm workers movement and the UFW depends on newspapers articles (which I use as well) and most prominently, retrospective interview data. I propose that the historical pieces of evidence presented here are complementary to the existent scholarship on farm workers. Moreover, of-the moment historical documents enable a critical perspective and analysis of California's agricultural labor strife, which is distinct from examinations based on interviews.

One shortcoming of interview-based studies is their reliance on memory, which can be faulty, but often this has been taken care of in previous studies by confirming interview data with newspaper reports and other interviews. The more critical shortcoming in relation to farm worker scholarship is that much of the analyses are concerned with the same period of years, the 1960s or 1970s, and the same outcome: the successful moment in which farm labor agreements were agreed upon after years of strike action. Therefore, interviews concerned with the same events conclude with what seems to be a *historical script* of the farm workers movement. We know it ends with the contract agreements but have only competing explanations of what produced that success. This study provides perspective on what happened before, during, and after the victorious moment for farm workers.

Last, much of this literature set is not deeply concerned with the sociology of race and class. Racial politics and tensions are not part of the evaluative mission and thus the workers are cast as a group of laborers versus powerful landowners and nothing more.

Or they are portrayed monolithically as an underemployed, exploited labor force for which race and racial identity takes a backseat to their class status.

ARCHIVAL VISITS AND DATA

In doing the study, I traveled to several archival locations and my movement from site to site is indicative of how the dissertation evolved. Initially, I focused on the official archives of the UFW housed at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Urban and Labor Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit. The fact that these papers are repositied in Detroit is telling of the early relationship that was forged between Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers, and Cesar Chavez. Long before any California University could or would even consider reposing the UFW papers, a deal was signed in the 1970s to make the Reuther library the official repository for the documents. Within this massive collection, I was able to access the papers of Chavez, Larry Itliong—a central Filipino labor activist and UFW Vice President, Marshall Ganz—another activist and UFW Executive Board member, and more general papers emanating from a variety of administrative sections within the union.

My original intent was to only collect data at the Reuther library—as this collection alone was ample—and I believed the dissertation like other studies of the UFW would run from the 1960s to the 1980s. However, references to “the past” in various documents, allusions to the Bracero Program and workers from Mexico required a historical sociological analysis of not the UFW, but of a social movement of farm workers that went further back than the 1960s. I admit that I was resistant initially. I reset the starting point to 1959 with the founding of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and then further back to the 1930s. Thereafter, I was clued into the fact that

the Bracero Era deserved a chapter all its own after writing up the chapter on the 1930s labor agitation.

As the dissertation grew into something I did not expect it to become, travel to other archives became necessary. For chapter 3, I visited the Japanese American Research Program collection at UCLA as the role of Japanese tenant farmers in the farm labor strife of the 1930s became evident. Additionally, by visiting these papers, the dissertation was able to sharpen its point that Asian Americans are simply ignored in most of the sociological analyses on farm labor history. I collected transcripts of interviews conducted with farm workers in the 1970s who had witnessed the labor strife of the 1930s from San Francisco State University's J. Paul Leonard library. Stanford University also offered some important documents from the papers of Ernesto Galarza, a legendary Mexican American activist and labor organizer—a definitive biography of his academic and activist work is yet to be written into the literature. I also spent some research time at UC-Berkeley's Bancroft Library to look into the papers of economist and activist Paul S. Taylor—his documents also shed light on the role of Asians in California agriculture.

Finally, as I considered the role of the state during the Bracero era in procurement of Mexican workers, it brought to bear the role of the state government and wider state apparatus in their engagement with farm labor affairs. Therefore, I also visited the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California. It is peculiar that Reagan is almost never invoked into studies of the battle for farm workers, as his administration, both gubernatorial and presidential, were vehemently anti-labor and he presided over California from 1967 to 1975.

The task of neatly categorizing and indexing the documents in the study is difficult to accomplish. This is no understatement as the documents are spread across the nation and are generally processed in the various archives, with the exception of Detroit, as “farm worker” or “farm labor” papers. In essence, the dissertation offers data that is taken from memos, letters, telegrams, bulletins, labor union newspapers, interviews, newspaper articles, published primary sources, census data, government and labor union reports, and even notes scribbled out on bits of paper. These “fragmentary” bits of evidence are woven together, as best I could, to present an analysis of social movement dynamics and the struggle and strife which working people of color have played out in the fields, ranches, farms, packinghouses, cities, towns, churches, and government halls of California.

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