

“EXPLOIT THE LAND, EXPLOIT THE PEOPLE”: THE TREADMILL OF
PRODUCTION AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATES FOR
FARMWORKERS IN TEXAS

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“EXPLOIT THE LAND, EXPLOIT THE PEOPLE”: THE TREADMILL OF
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2009

This thesis is dedicated to Texas farmworkers and their tireless advocates.

*Sol que eres tan parejo
para repartir tu luz,
habrias de enseñarle al amo
pa'qu'él sea igual que tú.*

- *Unknown lyricist, as quoted in Tafolla and Teneyuca (2008:22)*

Sun, you are so even, so fair,
as you share your light so equally with everyone,
you should teach my boss
to be as fair as you.

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ABSTRACT

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The structure of the agricultural industry in the United States has changed significantly since World War II, with consequences for agricultural laborers. This study is framed by Schnaiberg’s (1980) treadmill of production theory, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 16 community advocates for farmworkers in Texas. The results of these interviews demonstrate that community advocates face factors limiting their resistance to the treadmill, including: funding restrictions, the structure of the agricultural industry in Texas, socio-cultural conditions for Texas farmworkers, and limitations to

binational/transnational efforts. Community advocates also discussed factors promoting their resistance to the treadmill, including: exclusion from the system, integration of human and environmental issues, participation in networks and coalitions, and promotion of an alternative. This study documents both groups of factors within the process of treadmill resistance.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As social scientists, we are in a position to describe, analyze, and assess the social developments that indicate a growing intolerance for the social and ecological impacts of the treadmill's trajectory (Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg 2008:100-101).

Around the 1940s, significant changes in the productivity of the agricultural industry in the United States changed the role of farming from a means for producing people's food to a means for producing profit. Production shifts occurred from mainly labor-intensive to technology-intensive methods, with changes such as increased mechanization and monoculture farming leading to an increased usage of chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides). These changes have affected not only the owners of farms, but also the farmworkers. Tilman et al. argue that the next 50 years may represent the last period of rapid global agricultural expansion and that "[j]ust as demand for energy is the major cause of increasing atmospheric greenhouse gases, demand for agricultural products may be the major driver of future nonclimatic global change" (2001:283).

Shifts in the agricultural industry illustrate the consequences of the treadmill of production, a theoretical perspective originated by Schnaiberg (1980). Within this treadmill, production decisions in the name of economic growth have resulted in increased human and environmental devastation. Schnaiberg (1980) focuses on problems

of production rather than consumption, which are influenced by an economic growth coalition consisting of capital, the state, and labor. Some researchers argue that organized labor has the greatest potential to slow the treadmill through coalition with environmental movement participants, working from the local level to the global level (Gould et al. 2008; Obach 2004).

Currently, there is little research on community advocates for farmworkers in the United States as a source of labor resistance to the treadmill of production. In addition, previous research on community advocates for agricultural laborers has largely overlooked the Texas region, using the experiences of farmworkers and community advocates in California to represent the entire U.S./Mexico border region. This study argues that there are significant differences between the structure of the agricultural industry in Texas and California, thus rendering additional research necessary.

My research explores the nuances in experiences of sixteen community advocates for Texas farmworkers, using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The primary geographic focus for these interviews is the Rio Grande Valley, an important region in the history of Texas agricultural laborers. I inquire about how the issues of race, class, gender, and the environment are related in the process of community advocacy for farmworkers, what problems are faced by farmworker communities in Texas, and what potential solutions are proposed by these communities.

The interview data indicate that the process of community advocacy for farmworkers in Texas cultivates ideological support for the resistance of the treadmill of production. The data also identify the restrictions to social change, which are often embedded within the structure of the system. These findings develop a more complex

description of treadmill resistance, grounding this theoretical perspective within several other environmental discourses.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the advocacy efforts of community organizations related to farmworkers, this study had to first explore various aspects of the industry within which farmworkers are rooted. As a result, this literature review ties together previous research from multiple areas. It begins with an examination of research on community advocacy and agricultural labor unions, and continues with a discussion of agricultural trends in the United States and, specifically, Texas. It also links previous research on farmworker-related immigration with transnational trends related to neoliberalism, globalization, and free trade agreements. In looking at the issues of gender, race and class, this literature review connects research on agricultural labor, gender, and the environment with research on the environmental justice movement. Since previous studies have not utilized the treadmill of production theoretical perspective to examine community advocates for farmworkers, a more in-depth examination of treadmill theory as it relates to agriculture is also included.

Community Advocacy and Grassroots Efforts

Though grassroots organizers and community advocates may not always define themselves as members of a particular social movement, such as the environmental

movement, their actions often serve as markers of resistance to the status quo in their individual communities. Several researchers have examined these efforts as examples of “doing politics” (Honig 1996; Naples 1991; Platt 1997). For these communities, grassroots activities and experiences encourage empowerment and provide an “alternative means of political participation that – compared to electoral politics – is more accessible to marginalized groups” (Platt 1997:54). Similar to the role of unionization for laborers, grassroots organizations develop community strength and empowerment through collectivity.

Naples explains that community-based activities often take place separately from the “formal political establishment,” which can result in an “underestimate” of these individuals’ political involvement (1991:479). For the women advocates interviewed by Naples (1991), to identify their efforts as political would have been a paradox; from their perspective, the system of politics generally aids those already in power. Instead of political or financial interests, typically, the commitment of these advocates to a particular community or cause is based on the personal experiences of these individuals.

Agricultural Labor Unions

Labor movements are one way in which individuals organize as communities. Participation in these organizations can be greatly altered by changes in the industries in which these individuals are employed, as well as changes in the political sphere (Honig 1996). For example, El Paso’s Farah Manufacturing Company was the first garment plant in the southwest region to become unionized (Honig 1996). However, large-scale worker downsizing at the plant ultimately meant a deterioration of the union, since few women involved in the union’s formation remained employees in the early 1990s (Honig

1996). These labor reductions represent the same transitions toward utilizing cheaper offshore labor that has occurred in numerous other industries, demonstrating the effects of neoliberal economic policy and the globalization of corporations on unionization.

In terms of agricultural labor, workers have historically been subjected to a “doctrine of ‘agricultural exceptionalism,’” in which farmworkers have been excluded from many labor protection and organization laws, including the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which protects the rights of employees to collectively bargain (Schell 2002:141). In California in the early 1960s, César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and others worked to form a farmworker rights organization, the National Farm Workers’ Association (NFWA) (United Farm Workers 2009). The mostly Latino NFWA and the mostly Filipino Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) participated together in the Delano Grape Strike in 1965, and by 1966, the two groups combined to form the United Farm Workers’ Organizing Committee (UFWOC), which then became the United Farm Workers (UFW) (United Farm Workers 2009).

According to Gordon, California’s powerful agribusiness industry utilized their “wealth to influence the legal and political system at the local, state, and national level” (1999:55). Despite the power of this industry, the UFW has worked to pursue labor contracts, as well as improvements in worker health and safety (Gordon 1999). Kamm argues that the UFW represented “both a union and a civil rights movement,” particularly in the 1960s, though both the national Civil Rights movement and the UFW movement have since then largely lost momentum (2000:780). Possibly as a result of this organization’s prominence (particularly in connection with California) and due to the high number of agricultural laborers in the state of California, numerous studies have

focused on California's farmworker population (Castañeda and Zavella 2003; Gordon 1999; Kamm 2000; Rose 1990).

Few academic analyses have focused on agricultural labor union participation in the state of Texas, despite its history as an agricultural region and as the sending or home state for many migrant workers (exceptions include Jepson 2005 and Valdes 1995). The 2000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Enumeration Profiles Study reported that Texas had the second highest number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents after California (which had over 3.5 times as many farmworker families) (National Center for Farmworker Health 2000). Based on 2002 Census of Agriculture data, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) found Texas to be ranked fourth in hired farm and contract farm labor expenses (Kandel 2008). Texas also received the largest amount of subsidies from the USDA in 2002, 1.2 billion dollars (Womach 2004).

Unlike California, Texas never passed a law protecting a farmworker's right to collectively organize, such as the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (1975). Bux and Tolar assert that the union membership decline in the right-to-work state of Texas "is even more pronounced" than in the overall United States, with only 4.9 percent of all workers belonging to a union in 2006 (2007:426). With the growth of commercial agriculture in the early 20th century, farmworkers of Mexican-descent faced "Jim Crow" laws of discrimination and segregation, where they were seen as "laborers" and not "actual or potential citizens" (Montejano 1987:20). According to Montejano (1987), four factors contributed to the decline of "Jim Crow" segregation in Texas and the increase in agricultural labor activism among Mexican Americans: the need for soldiers and workers

in World War II; the mechanization of agriculture; the growth of urban, corporate ownership of agriculture; and the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s.

In 1966, “racial and class-based oppression” led the Mexican-American farmworkers of La Casita farms in Rio Grande City, Texas to strike, demanding improvements in wages and working conditions (Jepson 2005:685). This strike served as the catalyst for the grassroots farmworker movement in Texas, which later joined the UFWOC, led by César Chávez. Local and state-wide grower opposition to these efforts were stronger in Texas than in California, based on the “conspicuous grower-bureaucratic alliance,” with extralegal efforts made by local law enforcement and the Texas Rangers to halt unionizing (Bowman 2005). For example, in June of 1966, a local official “gave orders to local law enforcement to use county equipment ‘to spray insecticide on a group of workers in an attempt to break up a meeting’” (Bowman 2005). By 1967, the Starr County strike and boycott was defeated and Chávez pulled back on unionizing activities in Texas.

During a speech at the McAllen Civic Auditorium in 1969, Chávez seemed to renew his pledge to assist with a farmworker campaign in the Rio Grande Valley. Antonio Orendain, who became the leader of the farmworker movement in the region, had initially worked in Texas for the UFW in 1966. Throughout the early 1970s, he waited for Chávez’s pledge to be fulfilled. Against his preferences, Orendain was reassigned to Chicago by Chávez in 1974, where he realized that the UFW’s focus on California would not shift (Bowman 2005). By this time, he had grown tired of waiting for support for Texas’ farmworker movement by Chávez and decided to return to Texas. In 1975, he split off from the United Farm Workers and formed the Texas Farm Workers’

Union (TFWU). Orendain attempted to affiliate the new union with the UFW, but Chávez would not recognize the TFWU (García 1979:28). Several factors seemed to have contributed to the split between the TFWU and the UFW in Texas, including differences in tactics and strategies between Chávez and Orendain. For example, a spokesman for the UFW had said “there can only be one farm workers’ union” (García 1979:28). During this time, the national UFW “refused to publish any information on the dramatic situation developing in Texas ... [seen by some as] content to continue isolating the Texas farm workers by ignoring their struggle” (Bowman 2005:97).

Though locked in an organizational feud with the TFWU, women activists reinvigorated the UFW-organized farmworker movement in the mid-1970s. The newly female leadership was “committed to women’s inclusion” in all aspects of the organizing process (Jepson 2005:691). Based on this group’s efforts, the Texas Legislature passed a bill in 1981 that outlawed the use of the short-handled hoe, a success for Texas farmworkers (Bowman 2005). However, the momentum behind both the UFW and the TFWU declined in the 1980s. The Unión de Trabajadores Agrícolas de Fronterizos (UTAF) emerged in this time period, but the undocumented status of many agricultural workers created great challenges to organizing (Valdés 1995). This union argued that “winning a contract at the expense of deporting workers ... would neither improve working conditions in the long run nor foster unity among farmworkers” (Valdés 1995:123).

Agricultural Trends

As industrialization and urbanization increased in the United States from the 1860s to the early 1900s, the amount of available farm land began to diminish, as well as

the population of individuals wanting to remain in the rural lifestyle. This resulted in higher demands for imported food to supplement the domestic agricultural supply (Griffith et al. 1995). As a result, the urbanizing population grew concerned about the rising prices of food. Griffith et al. states: “Low-cost food had been and continues to be an important mechanism for social peace in the face of declining or stagnant wages for industrial workers” (1995:9).

Thus, the social and economic pressure for cheaper food led to the commercialization of the agricultural industry, with support laid for the use of “fertilizers, hybrid seed, farm machinery,” and seasonal foreign-born migrant labor to increase productivity without increasing short-term prices of food (Griffith et al. 1995:9). The USDA took on increasing agricultural productivity as its foremost objective, with little attention paid to the use of pesticides and other chemicals, which were also its responsibility before 1970 (Gordon 1999). According to Gordon, the “USDA functioned as little more than a lobbying arm of the agribusiness industry” (1999:57).

In Texas, the lower Rio Grande Valley has historically been an important supplier of farmworker laborers based on its availability of cheap housing, *colonias*, and its winter season work, though many of these Valley laborers originally emigrated from Mexico (Griffith et al. 1995). From 1950 to 1975, Texas agriculture thrived (Griffith et al. 1995:102). Since then, there has been a decline in the Texan migrant labor force. Factors contributing to this decline include: the settlement of previously-migrating laborers in other states; increasing mechanization, particularly of cotton and sugar beets; periodic freezes; and the relocation of farms (such as to Mexico) (Griffith et al. 1995).

There has been a reduction in Texas agriculture since World War II by at least 40 percent, which mirrors the overall trends in the United States (Griffith et al. 1995:105).

Particularly in terms of the Rio Grande Valley, the history of agriculture in Texas would be incomplete without mention of *colonias* (Griffith et al. 1995). Beginning around the 1950s, developers have sold unincorporated plots of agriculturally unprofitable land at minimal costs to low-income individuals. These residences typically lack infrastructure, such as sewer systems, electricity, potable water, and other basic necessities. The U.S. Census does not separately identify individuals living in *colonias*, thus it is a challenge to accurately determine the size of this population. Some researchers estimate that the population of Texas *colonia* residents is approximately 396,000, living in about 1,800 individual colonias (Wallisch and Spence 2006:289). The seasonal nature of migrant farmwork required laborers to find housing to which they could return after the end of each migration, making them ideal customers for *colonias*, rather than rental properties.

Immigration Issues Related to Agricultural Labor

The history of large-scale commercial agriculture has remained since its origins connected to the agricultural labor supplied by individuals of Mexican descent, as a “normal, functioning ingredient of Southwestern agribusiness” (Stoddard 1976:175). Since the late 1800s, Mexicans and Mexican Americans have been subjected to the vacillations of American agricultural policy, with its endless pulls and pushes. In the 1930s, the government called for the migration of many Mexican farmworkers back to Mexico in forced repatriations (Valdés 1995). However, agricultural growers in the 1940s once again demanded Mexican workers. Based on the abuses incurred during the

repatriations of the Great Depression era, Mexican leaders persuaded the U.S. government to sign a treaty, known as the Bracero Program, permitting workers to be hired as contract employees (Valdés 1995). These contracts, which included worker protections and wage or piece rates, were said to oppose the “free market” desires of agricultural employers, who many times sought out undocumented workers over braceros (Griffith et al. 1995; Valdés 1995).

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) worked with the agricultural growers to allow a “flood” of undocumented workers into the United States before the peak of the harvest, and then to deport these workers after the end of the harvest (Valdés 1995:120). This deportation effort was entitled Operation Wetback (Stoddard 1976:181). By 1964, the Bracero Program had come to an end, coinciding with the increasing mechanization of agriculture. With the growing success of the UFW and the supposed “transition” to hiring domestic workers, employers were faced with higher worker demands and lacked the option of forced worker deportation to Mexico (Valdés 1995). Such a transition would have involved infrastructural changes, such as modifying housing arrangements to accommodate migrating families rather than single men (braceros) (Griffith et al. 1995). Many employers continued to recruit the “most vulnerable and least likely to leave the farm labor market,” with little attention paid to citizenship (Griffith et al. 1995:19).

By the mid-1960s and 1970s, growers and labor contractors turned to H-2 Guestworker Program laborers (in addition to undocumented workers). Unlike the Bracero Program, the H-2 Program did not require “a guaranteed contract period, medical coverage,” nor “the right to choose representatives to discuss working conditions”

(Valdés 1995:122). In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed by Congress, in order to control undocumented migration. The IRCA divided H-2 workers into H-2A employees (temporary agricultural workers) and H-2B employees (temporary non-agricultural workers), and allowed an additional wave of agricultural laborers to enter the U.S. as temporary residents between 1990 and 1993, citing a perceived labor shortage (Department of Homeland Security 2008b). Several results of the IRCA have been declined wages, worsened working conditions, decreased amount of work available, and worsened housing conditions (Martin 1994; Valdés 1995). Following the IRCA, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American-Dominican Republic-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) have also created challenges for agricultural worker advocacy groups, pushing upward farmworkers from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

The George W. Bush administration revised the H-2A visa program, making it even easier for agricultural companies to hire laborers from outside the United States. Under these latest rules, employers only need to attest in writing to an agricultural labor shortage in the United States before hiring foreign workers, rather than requiring certification of a labor shortage by the Department of Labor (Gamboa 2008). Among other changes, according to U.S. Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao (2008), the methodology for determining wages of H-2A workers has also been altered.

Simultaneously, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has called for a 19 percent increase in funding for border security and immigration enforcement efforts for the 2009 Fiscal Year, in comparison to the 2008 budget (Department of Homeland Security 2008a). As part of these efforts, DHS has requested 2 billion dollars for the

Secure Border Initiative (SBI), more commonly known as the border fence or border wall along the U.S./Mexico border (Department of Homeland Security 2008a). In 1976, Stoddard wrote about the incongruence of governmental legislation, or what he terms “legal fictions” (often created in areas distant from the borderland region), and the “realities of the border which is America’s most economically depressed area” (177). As exemplified by DHS’ border fence efforts and the local resistance to these actions, Stoddard’s (1976) portrayal remains accurate today.

Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Free Trade Agreements

Since the 1980s, the United States government has pushed for the increasing use of the neoliberal economic model, with its concept of the “free market” and “free trade.” The combination of deregulation, the privatization of previously state-owned industries, and the increasing globalization of markets has had major world-wide effects (La Botz 2007). These policies have led to large-scale impoverishment in Latin America, as well as large-scale emigration, “first to cities of their own nation, then from one Latin American nation to another ... or, leaving Latin America, to the United States or Europe” (La Botz 2007:64).

The George H.W. Bush administration, in talks with the Salinas administration in Mexico about NAFTA, refused to discuss the possibility of the “free movement of people,” in addition to the “free flow of goods and services” (Valdés 1995:129). Governmental leaders also failed to anticipate the devaluation of the peso, which some researchers suggest could have exaggerated the negative effects of NAFTA (Morales and Stallmann 2000:26). In preparation for NAFTA, former president of Mexico, Salinas, altered Constitutional Article 27, thereby allowing the communal landholdings or farm

land, *ejidos*, to be “broken up, sold off, and privatized,” an action which has driven some of Mexico’s most disadvantaged residents further into poverty (Hu-Dehart 2003:245). Although NAFTA has certainly brought about agricultural changes around the globe, limited information exists in the sociology literature on its effects on Texas’s farmworker population.

The Intersection of Agricultural Labor, Race, Gender, and the Environment

Typically, the literature relating agricultural labor and environmental concerns focuses on issues of environmental health or worker risks, such as pesticide exposure (Arcury et al. 2006; Gordon 1999; Schmidt and Scott 2000). Articles with environmental justice frameworks often cite examples from the U.S./Mexico border (though not necessarily mentioning farmworkers), such as river contamination by waste products of *maquiladoras* (manufacturing plants), which has caused severe environmental degradation in the border region (Bandy 1997; Bullard and Johnson 2000). Agricultural laborers are affected by these environmental problems, since the majority of residents in the Lower Rio Grande Valley region get their drinking water from this polluted water source (Bullard and Johnson 2000).

Some researchers have described a spiritual connection between Chicano/Latino agricultural workers and the land (López, Guajardo, and Scheurich 2002; Lynch 1993). The Chicano/Latino environmental perspective in the U.S. is described as being based out of “remembrances of places lost” (Lynch 1993:119). For example, Anzaldúa writes,

In the 1930s, after Anglo agribusiness corporations cheated the small Chicano landowners of their land, the corporations hired gangs of *mexicanos* to pull out the brush, chaparral and cactus and to irrigate the desert. The land they toiled over had once belonged to many of them, or had been used communally by them. Later the Anglos brought in huge

machines and root plows and had the Mexicans scrape the land clean of natural vegetation (1987:9).

This connection differs from the white-dominated environmental perspective, which has historically been based on a dichotomized and separated version of humans and nature (Lynch 1993:117). In the 1970s, Catton and Dunlap (1978) initiated a discussion of paradigms related to human-environment relations. They called for the replacement of the human exceptionalism/exemptionalism paradigm (HEP), which involved a dichotomized human-environment relationship, with the new environmental/ecological paradigm (NEP), which emphasized “physical and biological limits” and interdependency of biotic communities (Catton and Dunlap 1978:45).

In terms of gender issues and agricultural laborers, it has been difficult for researchers to access female farmworkers, a more under-researched group than male farmworkers. Studies of female farmworkers indicate that sexual discrimination, harassment, and abuse are among the most prominent points of discussion (Dominguez 1997; Ontiveros 2006; Kamm 2000; Shea 2003). For example, Kamm argues that it is sometimes difficult for women to gain agricultural work from farm owners because the only provided housing or sleeping and bathing facilities are “single-sex,” or for men only (2000:249). According to Shea, “dominant images either erase [the woman farmworker’s] labor...or romanticize her labor, as in images on raisin boxes” (2003:132).

Other researchers have argued that female farmworkers are even more vulnerable to exploitation than male farmworkers (Dominguez 1997; Kamm 2000; Ontiveros 2006). Castañeda and Zavella argue that migrant Mexican women workers are both “racialized” and “sexualized” (2003:127). In addition, for immigrant women (and men), disadvantages “tend to be accentuated by limited access to legal status,” (Zentgraf

2002:625). In terms of the intersection between the environment and gender, ecofeminism argues that the domination and commodification of women and the domination and commodification of the environment are not unrelated, though Banerjee and Bell (2007) contend that this perspective has a stigmatized status within environmental social science (Banerjee and Bell 2007:6).

The Environmental Justice Movement: Race, Gender, Class, and the Environment

Some environmental social scientists have moved away from the label of “ecofeminism,” while still incorporating gender into their analyses. For these scholars, gender is treated as a “critical social variable in securing access to natural resources,” which intersects with other areas, like “race, caste, and class” (Banerjee and Bell 2007:6). Notably, many of these researchers have analyzed the environmental justice movement as a representation of the intersection between the environment and social stratification by race, gender, or class (Bandy 1997; Bose 2004; Bullard and Johnson 2000; Krauss 1993; Kurtz 2007; Platt 1997; Silliman 1997).

Although many of these studies do not directly discuss advocates of agricultural laborers, their descriptions of ecological and social inequalities are analogous. For example, Bandy’s (1997) study of environmental justice organizations on the U.S./Mexico border in California includes community support organizations for women and for *maquiladora* workers. Yet, these “brown” environmental issues have sometimes been overlooked by the mainstream environmental movement. Taylor argues that the environmental justice frame is different from the mainstream environmental frame, whose “images related to wilderness and wildlife protection” resonate more strongly with its white, middle-class activists than social justice issues (2000:514).

In California, the UFW and mainstream environmental organizations aligned in opposition of agribusiness' use of DDT; however, alignment was based on the effects on wildlife rather than Latino farmworkers that the mainstream environmental organizations lent their support (Gordon 1999). Both racial and class divisions between the constituencies of mainstream environmental organizations and the UFW movement, as well as conflicting political and economic agendas led to the "limiting cooperation" between mainstream environmentalists and farmworkers in the 1970s (Gordon 1999:72). In terms of Texas farmworkers and the environmental and environmental justice movements, there is an absence of information in the academic literature (see Marentes 2004 for an example of this connection in a non-peer reviewed magazine).

Theoretical Framework: Treadmill of Production Theory

The treadmill of production theory, introduced by Allan Schnaiberg (1980), originally explored the political-economic context behind rapid increases in environmental degradation after World War II (Gould et al. 2008). With the increased capital accumulation of Western economies post-World War II, production shifts occurred from labor-intensive to technology-intensive methods, which demanded "far more energy and/or chemicals" than labor, and required increased production in order to increase profits (Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg 2004:296). The notion of the "treadmill" is based on an "image of a society running in place without moving forward" (Gould et al. 2004:297). Under the treadmill model, producers constantly seek increased profits and the expansion of the economy.

The emphasis in this model is on problems of production rather than consumption. Production decisions are not seen as determined by market forces (in

contrast with neoliberal economic theory) but by producers (capital), who are influenced by governmental regulations (state) and labor force negotiations (labor) (Gould et al. 2004:302). Thus, the triad of labor, state, and capital are involved in the continuation and acceleration of the treadmill as an economic growth coalition. Gould et al. argue that the “collective victories” of consumers have yet to “determine the *means* by which alternatives will be produced or even what alternatives will be produced,” using as evidence the “economic and political failure” of the grape boycott in California, despite its success in “raising social consciousness” about farmworker conditions (2004:301).

Unlike capital interests in the growth coalition, both the state and labor have contradictory roles within the treadmill system (Obach 2004). For example, both the state and labor face a “tradeoff between supporting treadmill growth and responding to social needs” or the needs of workers (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994:109). Since capital receives a disproportionate share of the benefits of treadmill acceleration, these interests are “inherently tied to the treadmill system” (Obach 2004:339). In contrast, the state and labor constantly struggle to increase their share of treadmill benefits. In doing so, this prevents the “worst failures of the system...to fester to the point of widespread popular resistance” to the treadmill (Obach 2004:339).

This study focuses primarily on the labor sector. In response to worker needs, the treadmill structure suggests that continuous economic growth is the (only) pathway toward poverty alleviation (Obach 2004). Despite the alienating and displacing effects of the treadmill, labor’s “major consciousness was that accelerating this new form of investment was necessary and sufficient for ‘social progress’” through expanding the economy (Gould et al. 2004:297). Labor has largely supported the acceleration of the

treadmill, with side-effects including: “unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and ill-health” (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994:83). As the “weakest link in the treadmill chain,” laborers have formed unions to represent their interests (Obach 2004:338). But, the political and economic structures within the United States have largely prevented these unions from “challenging production processes,” restricting their focus to certain bargaining topics and the acquisition of “material gains” for their individual members (Obach 2004:340).

Reflecting the increased globalization of capital, the treadmill concept has moved from the national level (the United States) to the global or transnational level (Gould et al. 2008). Gould et al. argue that this theoretical perspective may have had a greater reception in the global South than in the global North, possibly a result of its “resonance with the environmental livelihood struggles in peripheral nations of the global economy” (2008:59-60). For example, massive protests in Latin America in response to neoliberal policies in the 1990s brought about the election of presidents who opposed “at least nominally, the free market policies pushed upon” these countries (La Botz 2007:61). These changes represent potential support for treadmill-type critiques.

Although previous studies have failed to find evidence of any “substantial weakening” of the treadmill of production, researchers have identified the labor sector as the most likely location for any type of resistance or restructuring of the system (Gould et al. 2004:310; Obach 2004). Treadmill transnationalization has “broke[n] the alliance among workers, private capital, and the state,” particularly by labor outsourcing, making it “possible (or even necessary)” for labor to resist treadmill expansion (Gould et al.

2004:309). This “international ‘race to the bottom’” has also resulted in greater labor-environmental coalitions (Obach 2004:348).

In terms of the agricultural industry, Schnaiburg’s (1980) treadmill of production is separate from treadmill theory in agricultural economics, which was introduced in the 1950s as a way of understanding why “constant adoption of new technologies” does not result in increasing profits (Levins and Cochrane 1996:550). Levins and Cochrane (1996) found that only “early adopters” of new technologies made profits, and that those profits occurred only in the short-term, since the mass adoption of new technologies resulted in increased production and price reduction. The agricultural industry was discussed in Schnaiberg’s (1980) original description of the treadmill structure, with the examination of simultaneous domestic food production increases and agricultural labor decreases in the United States after World War II.

Schnaiberg (1980) explored the transition in agriculture to monoculture farming, enabled by increasing mechanization. This change led to increased weed and pest problems, and therefore, the increased usage of chemical additions (such as fertilizers and pesticides). With the growth of massive irrigation systems, the modern agricultural industry has created a highly unsustainable and easily threatened production system (Schnaiberg 1980). Ironically, as arid areas have been transformed into agricultural centers, many previous agricultural lands have been changed into commercial or residential lots, with increasing urbanization (Schnaiberg 1980). There have also been dramatic increases in ecological destruction since the 1980s due to the extractive industries of “logging, mining, and agriculture,” and primarily due to producers’ refusal to limit production/profits (Gould et al. 2004:307).

Since Schnaiberg's (1980) study, only a few researchers have applied treadmill of production theory to the agricultural industry, including a study of factory hog farming in Manitoba, Canada (Novek 2003) and a study of organic agriculture in the United States (Obach 2007). In terms of agricultural labor, Obach found that farmworkers typically oppose the "intensification of production," which he argues "is inconsistent with treadmill theory expectations" (2007:236). With little access to political power (among other factors), farmworkers have been unable to weaken the overall treadmill.

The importance of food in human societies identifies this issue as extremely relevant in understanding our current global resource crises and predicting future ones. Many studies have contributed to our knowledge of the agricultural industry, but they have been limited in their scope. Pairing the literature on treadmill of production theory with the literature on community advocacy for farmworkers in Texas uniquely bridges the realist perspective with the social constructionist perspective. In terms of social change, a noticeable gap in the literature on treadmill of production involves its somewhat shallow description of potential treadmill resistance. This study further develops this idea, centering treadmill of production theory within other environmental discussions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is based on 16 in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to “explore a topic more openly” through allowing respondents to “shape the order and structure of the interview” to fit their own experiences (Esterberg 2002:87). These methods reflect the emphasis in community advocacy on self-representation. For example, both the women’s health movement and the environmental justice movement in the United States emphasize the importance of community self-representation rather than representation by those with traditional authority or power (Silliman 1997).

This research requires a more nuanced understanding of people’s experiences than can be typically provided by survey questionnaires and quantitative analyses. The research questions for this project bridge environmental issues with issues of gender, race/ethnicity, and class as they relate to community farmworker advocates. Thus, while it is possible to look quantitatively at differences in environmental beliefs by gender (Blocker and Eckberg 1989; 1997), or by race and gender (Kalof, Dietz, and Guagnano 2002), this study follows in the pathway of numerous other researchers who have addressed cross-sections of these issues qualitatively (Baker 2004; Honig 1996; Kurtz 2007; Platt 1997).

The issue of race was particularly salient in these interviews, and although I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley, the place in which many of these interviews took place, I am not, nor do others perceive me to be, a Chicana or a Latina. Thus, I recognize that, in many of these interviews, my own race, gender, and class have influenced the emergent data (Hesse-Biber and Leckenby 2004; Marshall and Rossman 1999).

Sampling Procedure

I conducted sixteen interviews for this study. Since the purpose of this project was not generalization, but an in-depth understanding of the intersection of numerous issues in the realm of Texas farmworker community advocacy, the participants were recruited purposively through snowball sampling rather than random sampling.

Interviews were conducted in coffee shops, restaurants, offices, and homes, each time providing a semi-private or private area for communication. The interviews ranged from about thirty minutes to two hours. Prior to the interview process, each participant signed and received a copy of a consent form, which I explained to the participant before he/she signed the form. Each interview was recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

I used a semi-structured interview guide with primarily open-ended questions. The interview guide was revised throughout the interview process as the respondents expanded my understanding of the topic, and in order to include discussions that had emerged from earlier interviews. Both the original and the latest version of the interview guide are located in the Appendix (Appendices B and C). The interview guide consisted of four major sections: organization and advocacy information; farmworker issues; environmental issues; and structural issues and community solutions. Based on treadmill

of production theory, a primary focus was on the factors limiting and contributing to resistance to the treadmill.

Sample Characteristics

The primary selection factor for this study was that the interview participant had either previously worked or is currently working as a community advocate for farmworkers in Texas, broadly-defined. Although some previous research on community workers have focused only on women advocates, interviews for this study were conducted with men and women advocates (Honig 1996; Krauss 1993; Naples 1991; Platt 1997). The sample consisted of nine women and seven men. In terms of race/ethnicity, twelve individuals were Latina/o or Chicana/o, while four were white. Eight respondents were married, six divorced, and two single. Overall, thirteen of the advocates had children. The ages of participants ranged from 24 to 78. The mean age was 55. Twelve advocates were born in the United States, while four were born in Mexico. In terms of schooling, six individuals had completed less than their bachelor's degree, while ten respondents had either a bachelor's degree or higher. Within the latter group, seven participants had a graduate or professional degree. Of the sixteen advocates interviewed, eleven both grew up and did advocacy work in the state of Texas. At least ten different currently-operating organizations are represented by these respondents.

Access to Sample

In order to access a sample of community advocates for this research project, initially, an Internet search was conducted for community organizations in Texas that related in some way to the farmworker community. Based on my familiarity and proximity, the focus for this search was organizations in the Rio Grande Valley, which is

an important region in the history of Texas agricultural laborers. Following this search, email and/or telephone contact was attempted with these organizations. Through these initial contacts, snowball sampling was used to access further sample participants based on the selection criteria. No monetary compensation was offered for participating in the interviews.

Analysis Technique

During the transcription procedure, all names were changed to protect the anonymity of respondents, with pseudonyms used throughout the research process. Analytic induction was utilized to develop a more accurate understanding of the farmworker community advocates' experiences, with the analysis driven by the empirical data. Following the two-stage coding techniques described by Esterberg (2002), each interview was reviewed to determine the themes present in the data. First, using open coding, each line of each interview was analyzed for conceptual categories. I then sorted this information, using focused coding, into more clearly defined thematic groups.

As grounded theorists Corbin and Strauss describe, in some ways, I may have hindered my research by conducting an extensive literature review prior, during, and after the interviewing process (2007:36). I recognize that this research project, with the inclusion of my interview guide, has been shaped by these resources. Thus, in the data analysis stage, my grouping of categories into the two sections, factors limiting and factors promoting resistance to the treadmill of production, reflects my individual interpretation of this information guided by treadmill of production theory. My knowledge of the literature has allowed me to more fully explore any discrepancies or commonalities between the data and the literature.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Treadmill of production theory provides a framework for viewing community advocacy in Texas, particularly related to the agricultural industry. Though not all experiences of the participants in my study related to the treadmill of production, many of the themes that emerged from the data fit into two categories: factors constraining resistance to the treadmill of production and factors promoting resistance to the treadmill of production. Among the factors limiting resistance to the treadmill of production, five themes emerged: 1) funding restrictions for community organizations, 2) structure of the agricultural industry in Texas, 3) socio-cultural conditions for Texas farmworkers, 4) nature of capitalism in Texas, and 5) limitations to binational/transnational efforts. In contrast, the factors promoting resistance to the treadmill included: 1) exclusion from the system, 2) integration of human and environmental issues, 3) participation in networks and coalitions, and 4) promotion of an alternative.

FACTORS CONSTRAINING RESISTANCE TO THE TREADMILL

Funding Restrictions for Community Organizations

In comparison to the size of the issues addressed by community organizations, their budgets tend to be small. Thus, restrictions on the funding for these organizations

provide an important way in which their resistance of the structural status quo is constrained. In the university system, Gould et al. describe how the decrease in governmental-funded research has coincided with the increase in corporate-sponsored research (2008:95). None of the respondents mentioned any funding connections to a non-governmental-owned corporation.

A few interviewed men and women, however, did mention increased funding restrictions placed on their organization's work by the government. For example, the main source of funding for Robert's organization came through the Legal Services Corporation, an entity created by Congress to provide legal assistance to low-income persons. Robert described the changes that occurred when Republicans took over Congress in 1996:

There had always been a group of people who wanted to defund the Legal Services Corporation because they felt that programs ... were using those monies to advance a social agenda.... And I think the people that led that charge were people connected to the agricultural lobby who felt that we were being overly aggressive and overly effective.... And the first year they cut funding to the Legal Services program by one third. The idea was that they would cut by one third in each of three years, and it would be completely defunded. But they also passed restrictions on how we could use the monies that we got ... and basically that said, "If you receive any money from us, any money you receive from any other source has to comply with the restrictions we've put." And so, they didn't just say, you can't use our money to do class-actions, they said, you can't use any money. Any money. And the main restrictions they imposed were no class-actions, no representations of undocumented workers, which was a fair number of farmworkers, and no recovery of attorney's fees."

More than a Congressional budgetary tightening, these restrictions indicate the response of the other two members of the "growth coalition," the state and capital, to attempted changes pushed forth by those representing labor. When asked about the purpose of class-action lawsuits, Robert explained that they are primarily used to make structural changes in the operation of industries. Thus, these funding restrictions limit the ability of

community organizations to resist the treadmill of production within the agricultural industry.

Structure of the Agricultural Industry in Texas

Though Texas is not the only state affected by a strong agricultural lobby, there are certain characteristics of Texas' agricultural industry that make treadmill resistance and farmworker organization particularly difficult. Many interviewees argued that it was primarily these factors that prevented the farmworker movement in Texas from gaining as much publicity as California's farmworker movement. In addition to political conservatism and law enforcement abuse in the state of Texas, other factors include: short length of growing seasons, movement of laborers from one peak season to the next peak season, recruitment techniques and the use of contractors, exemptions in laws for farmworkers, and fierce competition based on a consistently-large pool of unskilled laborers. George recalled that César Chávez had thought that "Texas was just too tough a nut to crack."

The recruitment techniques utilized make Texas a "grower's market." According to participants, in Texas, the owners of an agricultural field hire contractors, who in turn, hire farmworkers to harvest the crops. The labor agreement between contractors (as representatives of owners) and farmworkers is built upon only the contractors having information about the production status of a field. When asked about this system, Robert explained:

I think a lot of it is, yeah, because of the way the business is structured.... I went to El Paso for about a month. And the recruiters in El Paso recruit at the bridge. And someone would say, "We're going to pick peppers and we're going to pay 70 cents a pound." And then someone else would say, "Oh come work for me, I'm going to pay you by the hour." Six dollars an hour, which was well above minimum wage at the time. And the way it

works, though, is these contractors are taking a bus of people to work a field. Well the first time they go through the field, they're going to pay them by the hour, right? Because that's a good yield. And so, when I say six bucks an hour, it seems like a lot. But they're going to be making more money because the field is very productive. And they're going to have pushers, which are people that set the pace. So if you don't keep up with the pace, they're going to be behind you saying, "You need to go faster, you need to go faster." And then when they offer a high piece rate, what seems like a high piece rate, it's maybe the last pass of a field. So you're going to go in there and there's very little to pick. You're doing the cleanup work and there's not – you're going to work a lot harder to get a lot less. And they're not going to push you because you're getting paid piece rate but.... And so, they're able to adjust that because they have all the information. So they know what's a good field, what's a bad field...and you don't know until you get there."

Without adequate knowledge on both sides of the buyer-seller relationship, the structure of Texas' agricultural industry violates the rules of determining fair market value for a particular service. According to the Supreme Court case, the *United States v. Cartwright* (1973), "The fair market value is the price at which the property would change hands between a willing buyer and a willing seller, neither being under any compulsion to buy or to sell and both having reasonable knowledge of relevant facts." Nonetheless, this type of recruitment has been highly-profitable for the owners in the agricultural industry.

The fight for recognized unionization in Texas among farmworkers has also been impeded by structural factors, such as the short growing seasons. Although labor unions in the United States have typically pushed for the expansion of the capitalist economy, Obach argued that "labor's role in the treadmill system is more complex than it first appears" and that "a reformed labor movement offers the greatest potential for redirecting the system as a whole" (2004:338). In Texas, attempts to organize farmworkers in a labor movement have met with many limitations, including the inability to get union contracts. Rachel discussed how even the attainment of contracts would have been futile, as they wouldn't have been "worth the paper they were written on because you couldn't

do anything if the grower didn't hold up his or her end of the contract." Texas' Right to Work laws and the lack of support for unionization of blue-collar workers among the general public are also factors restraining farmworker unionization.

Revealing the complexity of labor's role in the treadmill, some farmworkers were also resistant to the idea of unionization. Veronica described how some of the anxieties of many farmworkers stem from experiences with ineffective Mexican unions, which betray workers at the benefit of owners. In addition, the fears of job loss and salary loss for unionizing farmworkers in Texas are not unwarranted. Julia commented that, in the event of a union strike, "the main persons that are getting hurt are the workers because they're not bringing in an income," which is a fear understood by other community organizers. In response to these fears, Veronica employed "sit-downs" in the fields, rather than strikes. When strikes were used by the Texas farmworker movement, they were "lightning strikes," which were quick strikes used at "critical times" that would result in short-term price changes, but no long-term collective bargaining abilities.

All but one participant described the decline of agricultural labor in Texas, particularly from the 1980s to today. Several of the contributing factors include: two major freezes in 1983 and 1989, migrant workers' relocation outside of Texas, loss of agricultural fields to housing and businesses, increased mechanization in the agricultural industry, and post-NAFTA movement of farms to Mexico. These factors mirror those discussed by Griffith et al. (1995), who also described the reduction of agricultural labor in Texas. Notably, not all respondents were in agreement about the significance of each of these factors. Based on the difficulty of researching agricultural labor, many questions remained for the community advocates. When asked about shifts in agricultural labor,

Chris responded: “[W]hat’s happening to these families, are they going back to Mexico? Are they getting jobs locally? We know that there really aren’t that many jobs locally, you know, so are they getting retrained and doing other jobs?”

The issue of job shifts provides yet another example of the expanding nature of the treadmill of production. As the need for agricultural labor decreases, previous farmworkers have moved into other aspects of the agricultural industry, such as industrial animal processing, or alternative industries, such as construction, landscaping, or retail/service employment. Within each of these industries, the interviewees described how the circumstances remain the same: low wages, poor working conditions, similar recruitment techniques, lack of benefits, and instability through temporary or seasonal employment. Neoliberal economic theory would suggest that these wages are set only by the market and the supply/demand curve, where a higher supply of workers and a lower demand for these workers equates with lower wages.

With a lower domestic agricultural labor supply, and a higher demand for farmworkers by the agricultural industry (as evidenced by the new H-2A regulations which simplify the process of recruiting foreign workers), one would assume that the wages for these incoming workers would be higher. This is not the case. In Robert’s experience, these new regulations actually lower the “effective wage rate.” This understanding of wages provides further evidence for the rationale of the treadmill of production theory in focusing on producers. While Hector was at an out-of-state conference, a local person said, ““What’s the point of Tyson’s opening here because they pay so bad that only the Mexicans want those jobs.”” One negative outcome of an

accelerating treadmill is an increase in social inequality in the form of a ‘decline in wages and job opportunities’ for a majority of workers (Gould et al. 2008:14).

One additional effect of farmworker job shifts is a potential loss of connection to the land, which can amplify the ecologically-deleterious effects of the treadmill of production. When asked about these shifts, Lori reflected upon her own experience as an immigrant:

I know that so many of the people used to be very connected to the earth, and when they come here, they somehow just don't. They see their property just a piece where they live, they don't see it as the earth that can help them continue to live on, that can produce things, and we take care of that.... Some people used to work in the fields and so they were connected to the earth and so, but, when they come here they change jobs, you know ... some people do the construction, or the landscaping, taking care of somebody else's grass, somebody else's yard, and so for some reason, I think that that's part of it.

The environmental implications of the treadmill of production extend beyond the means of production (such as the effects of intensive pesticide application) to also include changes in people's ecological consciousness. The 2007 Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Conference cited a “new consciousness” as the only way to make the changes “needed to sustain human and natural communities” (Speth 2008:5). Some aspects of the proposed ecological “consciousness” parallel Catton and Dunlap's (1978) descriptions of a new environmental/ecological paradigm (NEP). The disconnect described by Lori represents a change in the reverse direction from both the “new consciousness” and the NEP.

Socio-cultural Conditions for Texas Farmworkers

In addition to the structural issues related to Texas agriculture, there are also socio-cultural conditions connected to farmworkers that constrain resistance to the

treadmill by community advocates in Texas. The participants described the “borderland” as a unique area, in one sense because of its historic fluidity, and in another because of its geographic isolation from the rest of the United States. In many interviews, this sense of isolation was seen as a contributing factor to the continued impoverishment of numerous *colonia* residents, who work in the cities but live in hidden communities where their existence can be forgotten. Several of the interviewed men and women also described the *compadre* system as a feature of the south Texas border region, involving political corruption, favors, and nepotism. Melissa described:

We should recognize and remember that the familial kinship networks in the Valley are so incredibly strong and people take pride in being from the Valley.... So all these little networks come into play and people know that one politico is going to do business with another and when they get elected into office, his little business on the side is coming up and that just seems like it’s socially accepted, people don’t even question it.... It’s still very dirty down there. I mean it’s dirty at the federal level, it only gets worse as it trickles down.

Hector explained how this same system permeates farmworker recruitment by contractors in Texas.

The exploitation of Latina/o farmworkers does not relate solely to the issue of racial discrimination, such as farmworkers witnessed most blatantly in the earlier years of the farmworker movement. Even as the Rio Grande Valley transitioned from white governmental officials to Mexican American governmental officials, the issue of class discrimination remained significant. As Nicole explained: “What I kept telling people is it’s not going to be any different, and I always say, look at Mexico. They’re all Mexican. So here, just because you elect a Mexican mayor doesn’t mean that you can sit back and say, everything is fine ... that doesn’t mean that there isn’t anything wrong with the system.” The issue of class discrimination, intensified by the *compadre* system and the

increasingly-strict immigration laws, has solidified the divide between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed.”

In my first interview, Andrea said, “[W]here people have been oppressed and then they make it out of that, then it’s always that fear, am I going to lose it, am I going to go back to being oppressed? And many times, unfortunately, they become the oppressor.” This division mirrors the split between workers under the treadmill of production system. As described in the previous section, most workers receive disproportionately fewer benefits of the acceleration of the treadmill (Gould et al. 2008). For a smaller group of workers (middle-level management), though, the treadmill increases wages and opportunities in exchange for their adoption of the treadmill mentality, which involves increasing “worker productivity” and “reducing expenses” at the detriment of the other group of workers (Gould et al. 2008:15). Several examples of these behaviors included treating farmworkers as “second-class citizens” or “disposable.” Rachel described the treatment of *colonia* residents in Hidalgo County by the emergency management coordinator after Hurricane Dolly:

The hurricane hit on Wednesday. Monday, we went out to a couple of *colonias* and they had four feet of water, dead animals floating in the water, the kids swimming under water. I mean people had not been contacted by anybody from the county. They had no food or water. And when I brought this up last month to the county judge and to [the emergency management coordinator], the whole thing was “Well, we wanted them to leave.” Well they weren’t going to leave.... He said ... he used to be a rancher and if you want your cows to come in, you quit giving them food and water. He said, “Next time, there will be none of these pods where people can go and eat.” He said, “We want them to leave the *colonias*....”

The connection made by the coordinator between the *colonia* residents and cows highlights the treatment of this group as a disposable commodity.

Beyond the issues of racial and class discrimination, participants also described an internal hindrance to resisting the treadmill of production, or what they called “learned oppression.” Joseph explained that the significance of the United Farm Workers’ phrase, “Sí, se puede,” was that it addressed this oppression. For Melissa, this internal oppression related back to the historical and cultural context of her people. She said:

We’ve had hundreds, hundreds of years of Catholicism being used as a way to oppress. So you see a lot of Catholic churches with the Christ on the cross suffering, human suffering ... but there’s also this, I think in English it’s “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” That has been pressed upon the people for generations and generations – so you stay quiet, you stay humble and you’re doing God’s work. Suffering is God’s work.... Then you have this idea that ... you’re supposed to suffer because, and the saying goes, “Así lo quiere Dios” ... that what you are going through is ordained by God because you did something in a past life or at some point in your life that you’re not worthy of being treated good. Complicate that with the long history of racism against Mexicans in Mexico and the United States, against the dark-skinned people, and it becomes this internal, colonialist-thinking monster that just devours.

Though this research did not delve into the connection between religion, oppression, and the treadmill of production, this comment paralleled Marx’s (1975[1844]) ideas on religion in a capitalist system. He wrote:

Religious suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people (Marx 1975[1844]:244).

Nature of Capitalism in Texas

Several respondents described how some of the constraints to resisting the treadmill of production are embedded within the capitalist system, particularly as modeled in the United States, and then at a more regional level, in Texas. Most of the participants did not verbally reject the system of capitalism, but almost all of the interviewees expressed concerns with its central motives. For example, Andrea stated:

“It is the whole economic structure...you know, getting more for your dollar. And it continues to drive – is that capitalism? I don’t think it has to be, um, I hope it’s not [laughs]. You know, I think that’s what drives it – the profit.” When asked about anti-capitalist movements, George reflected that even in the 70s, it was less about anti-capitalism and more about “fairness.” It is not unusual that people would express hesitancy about the rejection of capitalism. According to Gould et al., “Most ‘reasonable’ scholars have taken revolutionary or even macrostructural change to the political economy off the table, as either highly unlikely or impossible” (2008:56).

Although not identifying as anti-capitalist, many respondents revealed two problems with the ideology of capitalism, both of which contribute to the maintenance of the overall system. The first is the issue of profit, which was seen as problematic for almost all participants because of the way in which it quashed all other concerns, including concerns for human and ecological health. In terms of ecological effects, Veronica described the shift in the agricultural industry from feeding people to making a profit:

See I think what happened in the early 30s was that the growing of food was moved from feeding to making money...once that happened, then you’ve got the factories in the field, right?...when my dad was growing vegetables, it was like nothing, nothing was sprayed on them. One is because we were poor, and he was just a small farmer, so he could control things... when you have 20 rows of corn here and 20 rows of tomatoes here and 20 rows of whatever here, then the bugs that are attracted are different, right? They’re different, because some bugs like corn, some bugs like tomatoes, and some bugs like squash. And so what happens is you have that integrated pest management where they control themselves. But when you have all 100,000 acres of lettuce, let’s say, there’s no controlling, it’s the same bug. So what happens is that bugs get it, right? And so, the mono-bugs get a certain acre – there’s no way you can stop that. But what growers would do is, they’d say, “Well, let’s dust with some chemical.” But you make stronger bugs and they’ll eat the same

amount of acreage next year but now you've begun to poison the earth. And so the earth is ruined. Absolutely ruined.

This account closely parallels the description of commercial agriculture by Schnaiberg (1980).

The profit motive has also driven companies to decrease their labor supply through increasing the "efficiency" of production, which often involves work-load increases. For example, Hector described agricultural production changes since his youth:

You go sometimes to the fields and you'll see a big, cooled-off eighteen wheeler sitting right there next to the field, and they'll stack it up...I seen that thing a lot with cabbage now, and man, they put them in boxes – it's already sitting on a pallet, it goes right on there, and before you know it, two hours later, trucks full of cabbage going up somewhere up north... Back when I was young, we would load into a smaller truck ... they would take that to the shed, in the shed it would be sorted, and then from there, be packed up the way it's supposed to go, and then taken up.

In order to increase profit, a process that once took several groups of workers, was decreased to only one group of workers with increased tasks.

Part of the complexity of the capitalist system is the way in which it manipulates the notions of supply and demand. First, producers increase the supply of workers to justify low wages. For example, Miguel came to the U.S. as a young man from Mexico because he had read in the newspaper that the U.S. was losing money because they didn't have enough farmworkers to harvest the crops. When he came across the border, he discovered that it was not because of a labor shortage that he was desired, but because he could be exploited more easily. For Miguel, the issue of exploitation is central to the functioning of capitalism. The combination of increased exploitation of workers and increased usage of technology results in increased productivity.

Without a demand for products, this increased productivity cannot result in increased profits. Thus, producers must also increase the demand for their products by consumers. Miguel described this idea of false demand: “And I think there is the problem of capitalism, no? Because the capitalists are trying to make artificial needs, and you’re killing yourself for artificial needs. You enslave yourself for those needs.” This idea resonates with Marcuse who stated, “Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if those goods and services sustain social controls over a life to toil and fear – that is, if they sustain alienation” (1964:7-8).

The second problem participants described about capitalism involves the way in which it flattens any contradictions or alternatives. One of the interviewees recommended Marcuse’s (1964) work to understand this notion. Marcuse stated:

The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces ‘sell’ or impose the social system as a whole.... The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges the pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe (1964:11-12).

Through “militat[ing] against qualitative change,” the capitalist system and the treadmill of production continue to operate. This system creates a hierarchy of people which includes those who are “co-opted” by the system and those whose oppression has led to a lack of aspirations. For example, Joseph explained the word oppression as the process of keeping people in their place.

Beyond these two ideological problems, community advocates also discussed the negative effects of decreased governmental regulation in Texas (and the United States) and increased globalization of “free trade,” represented by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). When asked about the enforcement of laws and regulations, Robert said that governmental agencies have become less rigorous, shifting toward business self-monitoring and self-certification (such as the changes in H-2A regulations). Part of the constraints of enforcing regulations involves the limited numbers of regulators or officials, such as a small number of health inspectors and wage-an-hour investigators for farm labor in Texas. Joseph explained how, under capitalism, businesses will attempt to get away with what they can:

Well, I think any business, including agro-business gets away with what it can get away with. Environment or not. And it's so counterproductive, ultimately.... I think, just the nature – going back to capitalism, the way we have it right now is so un-self-restrained that it's whatever they can get away with. I'm sure if DDT was still legal, they'd still be using it.

Without enforceable worker and environmental protections, several advocates described the state's role in advancing the treadmill as superseding its other role of “address[ing] public needs” (Obach 2004:339).

In terms of NAFTA, though community advocates did not all agree on the consequences of this trade agreement, there was consensus on its failure to improve the Texas region and its success in devastating the Mexican economy. From Veronica's perspective, “NAFTA was not for workers, it was for corporations.” Maria saw the agreement and its movement of manufacturing jobs to Mexico as merely the next stop on the “race to the bottom.” One provision of the agreement had the potential to improve

working conditions for Mexican workers coming to the United States. When asked about NAFTA, Robert stated:

[I]n NAFTA, any provision from the host country, any protection would also apply to workers from that country when they came here to work. And I know that the Mexican constitution had a lot of liberal employment provisions and for awhile I know some people debated trying to incorporate those here in the U.S., but that hasn't gone anywhere.

Based on enforcement issues, Mexican workers in both Mexico and the United States have been unable to benefit from these employment provisions.

Limitations to Binational/Transnational Efforts

Though NAFTA brought about a liberalization of trade across borders, it did not simplify the binational or transnational efforts of community-based organizations. In resisting the treadmill of production, the growth of a “movement of movements” is seen as a potential alternative (Gould et al. 2008:107). According to Gould et al., though “[n]one of these developments *alone* is likely to prove an insurmountable obstacle to the treadmill,” the “*convergence* of these social forces may indicate that widespread support for an alternative development trajectory is beginning to take shape” (2008:105). Thus, transnational social, labor, environmental, and anti-corporate globalization movements are seen as important indicators. Based on the border connection between Texas and Mexico, I focused on binational efforts, asking participants whether or not their work extended across the border. Though most individuals described their organization as working at the local, state, and sometimes federal levels, they expressed frustration about working at the binational level, discussing multiple constraints.

Some of these constraints involved the time-consuming nature of their work in the United States. Rachel described how the severity of their struggles and challenges in

Texas kept them overly occupied. On the other hand, some limitations were of a more structural nature. For example, Robert described the difficulty of communication with Mexican farmworker clients who have limited access to phones, internet, banks, and transportation. In addition, corruption in Mexico's legal system, U.S. legal limitations concerning Mexican workers, and the presence of lawless *federales* in Mexico all contributed to fewer binational efforts. Veronica described one trip to Michoacán, Mexico to organize strawberry workers:

We were there for three months before the strawberry harvest started in California because we thought if we could find them in their homes, they wouldn't be so afraid to speak, to talk. And, I don't know. We were very successful. We found folks you wouldn't believe. But, when we were there, we were approached by the strawberry pickers ... who were working in [Mexican] strawberry farms, and they said, "Can you help us organize?" And we said, "Well, we don't think so. We can't do that here." Because it is dangerous, you know. You can find yourself in some ditch somewhere down there. And they would always say, "The last one that was organizing here sold himself out." And I'd think, well, you know, if somebody comes to you and says "I'll give you money or I'll kill you." Yeah, I think I'll take the money. So anyway, it is very dangerous. And now it's even more so.... Those poor people, huh?!

Though not all workers expressed fears about organizing in Mexico, most respondents saw binational work as more difficult than community advocacy work in the United States.

In contrast with many of the other participants, Melissa remained positive about the possibility of transnational work. She described how a small global coalition emerged from her advocacy efforts in Texas:

With the Mission case, I was here at UT [University of Texas at Austin] and we were organizing with some students and we happened to cross paths with ... a group of graduate students from India that are at UT that do work around the Bhopal issue, you know the big contamination that they had. It turns out ... the year that the plant closed in Mission – it closed because the federal government had started applying the

admissions regulations.... [W]ithin that same year, [it] relocated to Bhopal. The same corporation. So if it hadn't relocated, that explosion would have been in Texas. So we connected with them and we started organizing against Union Carbide and Dow.... Raising awareness about an international, global company.

The act of gaining awareness about the transnational negligence of a particular corporation united two geographically-separate groups of people. This example recognizes the potential for resistance to the treadmill of production. Gould et al. describe how “[b]ecause the treadmill of production is a global phenomenon, challenges to this system must also operate globally, while building strength at the local level” (2008:101). Although many factors make transnational work difficult, these interviews suggested that borderland communities, such as the Rio Grande Valley, could serve as locations for a growing global effort.

FACTORS PROMOTING RESISTANCE TO THE TREADMILL

Exclusion from the System

One aspect of the resistance of these community organizers to the treadmill of production relates to their more overarching resistance to the exploitation of certain areas and peoples. As described by Melissa, “Resistance will exist. Our people are still resisting – they’ve been resisting for over five hundred years. That ain’t going to stop.” As members of or advocates for groups whose labor and local environments have been exploited by the systems of capitalism and imperialism, several of these interviewees discussed their population’s exclusion from shareholders’ political and economic power (Gould et al. 2008).

This issue became particularly salient when discussing the resistance to the border wall (along the U.S./Mexico border) by these community organizations and mainstream

environmental organizations. Melissa explained that while some groups prefer to work within the existing system, other groups do not have access to the system. This comment was made in reference to the lack of resistance of the mainstream environmental movement to the existing treadmill system. Gould et al. describe this relationship:

Much of the U.S. mainstream environmentalism actually moved toward the adoption of *protreadmill* values in the 1980s and 1990s as a means to preserve their access to policy makers, to permit more cooperative relations with major polluters, and to gain greater access to funding from foundations and wealthy private donors (2008:57).

In adopting these values, mainstream environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club, have separated themselves from other community organizations, and failed to connect the environmental implications with the human implications of the treadmill system. Lori explained:

I was so happy to work with them, because we have never worked with – because a lot of the environmental groups are upper class – and we worked with them on several projects when we were opposing the wall, but then it came the time when we clashed and part of that is that ... they said that a lot of the constituents are ... people who cannot really recognize yet that ... immigrants are a valuable part of our society. So, for that, it's kind of a conflict, I mean they can do it for the environment, but they cannot really do it for the people.

This conflict mirrors the limited involvement of mainstream environmental organizations with the UFW in California since the late 60s, as described by Gordon (1999).

Participants' resistance of the treadmill of production also coincided with their resistance of the status quo. Several of the men and women interviewed, particularly those involved in the earlier parts of the farmworker movement, mentioned being frequently arrested (some almost weekly) in their opposition of an exploitative system. In addition, based on their population's exclusion from the educational system, Melissa explained how they relied upon other forms of knowledge, such as experiential-based

knowledge. She stated, “[T]hey didn’t need to have the scientific background; they didn’t need to see the EPA reports. They knew that their son had died with a massive tumor; they knew they had cancer in eight different parts of their body.” From a social constructionist perspective, this represents an “environmental justice frame,” which has been used by other low-income and minority groups in chemically-contaminated communities (Capek 1993).

Integration of Human and Environmental Issues

Though the focus of these organizations is predominantly anthropocentric, with issues ranging from housing to human health, the majority of advocates also saw themselves as members of an environmental movement. Elizabeth described how “all of the agencies are connected in one way or the other, so some people are working on certain projects, but there’s always the environment connected to that.” This notion reflects the resistance of these participants to binary thinking where the “dualistic separation of humans and nature reinforces the false notion that humans are outside and above nature and natural processes, instead of emergent from and inextricably interconnected to them” (Leiserowitz and Fernandez 2008:22).

One explanation for this overlap is that these “multi-issue” organizations embrace a more holistic worldview, where issues of social, economic, racial, and environmental justice are not separate. When asked about the existence of a connection between these issues, Lori said, “We see it as a whole issue. If you’re going to see the environment, you have to see the people too. And that is part of the environment.” This contrasts with the reductionist view that a “complex system is nothing but the sum of its parts” (Leiserowitz and Fernandez 2008:20). The work of these community advocates aligns more closely

with the idea of interdisciplinary research which focuses more on the whole or on systems rather than individual parts.

Participation in Networks and Coalitions

The concept of networks and coalitions was extremely important for the community advocates. Perhaps, these coalitions emerged as a product of a holistic worldview, where multiple issues are integrated. It is also possible that the integration of community organizations into coalitions and networks spurred the described holistic worldview through a collective understanding of problems. Elizabeth explained how participation in one movement ultimately means participation in many movements. Similarly, Andrea described how, “to us, the whole sense of collaboration and coalition works.” As described in the section on binational/transnational efforts, there is potential for treadmill resistance within the “movement of movements,” a phrase used to describe the groups advocating for “social justice, ecological integrity, meaningful democracy, and truly sustainable development” (Gould et al. 2008:107).

In creating these coalitions, there is the emphasis on solidarity and collaboration rather than competition. Miguel considered the cooperation process as similar to a mariachi group, where each member has value:

Even [one person] told me, look, here in Tejas, the unions they don't work. What, here in Tejas, what works is the politics.... And I said ... you have a violin, you know how to play violin. I know how to play guitarra and another, accordion. So I'm going to say the easy way is to play guitarra or the easy way is to play accordion – according to what you know or the way you know to do it. That's the best thing for you, but it's different for everybody.

Several interviewees described how it is more beneficial to work together rather than compete. For example, George's organization adopted the position of not choosing sides

in clashes between community organizations. Through networks and coalitions, participants found that their organizations became stronger and more effective.

Promotion of an Alternative

A significant aspect of these community advocates' resistance of the treadmill involves their promotion of an alternative. According to Gould et al., the "movement's greatest contribution may actually be in generating an alternative, or set of possible alternatives, to the treadmill development path" (2008:109). These alternatives provide new narratives for the "kind of world we are 'for,' not just the problems we are 'against'" (Leiserowitz and Fernandez 2008:36). From the perspective of the respondents in this study, this other "world" involves: female leadership and the incorporation of families, community self-empowerment and inclusivity, non-hierarchical structure, and an alternative vision for food. Though "[d]efeating the treadmill may be much more difficult than establishing its *alternatives*," having these alternatives "readily available substantially lowers the social costs and risks associated with its dismantling" (Gould et al. 2008:110).

Female Leadership and the Incorporation of Families

Previous research has shown that women are frequently involved as community advocates, sometimes based out of concern for their family and its future generations (Krauss 1993; Naples 1991; Platt 1997). According to Platt, the grassroots political involvement of the women in Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) linked the "symbolic and practical relevance of environmental justice to the protection, nurturing, and caretaking of the family – be it nuclear, extended, 'nontraditional,' neighborhood, or

raza” (1997:60). In some ways, their political empowerment also translated into personal empowerment.

Consistent with this research, most respondents described the community organizations in Texas as also made up of women members and leaders. Andrea described the makeup of the organization with which she is involved:

I would say ... most of the leadership of the organization are women, most of the people involved with [this organization] are women, I mean women are it [laughs].... [W]e do development of leadership, and that means that many of our women are beginning to be more comfortable with who they are, able to work for what they know is right, you've got a lot of, you know, development of the sense of who I am then translates to their roles as women, as moms, as wives, and as employees.

This empowerment of women creates a resistance to patriarchy and traditional gender roles. Within treadmill of production theory, gender is completely left out, though references are made to racial and class oppression, and the need for a transnational redistribution of resources (Gould et al. 2008:85). As argued by Banarjee and Bell, “it is not possible to understand the ecologically destructive consequences of dominant trends ... without understanding, *inter alia*, their gendered character” (2007:14). Thus, the resistance of patriarchy must also be an aspect of treadmill of production theory.

The Texas farmworker movement has been predominantly female-led since the mid to late 1970s, which contrasts with the predominantly male-led movement in California (Jepson 2005). As explained by Jepson (2005) and Veronica, this may relate to the early efforts dedicated toward women’s empowerment and the integration of women into all union activities. Additionally, it may relate to the structure of agricultural work in Texas, which consists of a more stable and family-based farmworker population than is present in California. Veronica described how the farmworker movement in Texas focused on the entire family (who may all have participated in the farm work),

rather than the male wage-earner alone. This built, in her words, “a stronger unit.” As a result, community organizations in Texas have focused on both work-related (such as wages and working conditions) and non-work-related issues (such as housing and social services).

Community Self-Empowerment and Inclusivity

The importance of self-empowerment in the resistance of the treadmill also extends beyond gender to the entire communities involved with these organizations. Possibly in response to what was described as “learned oppression,” many of the community advocates in this study focused on the need for community-level self-empowerment. Although self-empowerment implies a movement emergent from the people, themselves, several participants discussed how community organizers can participate in the process by training people in advocacy skills. For some, this process was about helping people to find their voice. Veronica remembered how one man “used to say to me that he couldn’t speak, he just couldn’t say things. So, the wonder of [his experiences with the organization] was that he learned how to talk and ... had his own voice about things.”

For others, this process involved helping people in their transformation of identity. As an example, Nicole discussed how many *colonia* residents were worried about legal status exposure when advocating for their issues in front of the county commissioners. She described the difficult process whereby people switched from seeing themselves as undocumented individuals to taxpayers. When people began recognizing themselves as valuable, but ignored, members of the community, they also began resisting their exclusion.

Many of these community advocates emphasized the importance of inclusivity in understanding both problems and solutions, finding that it is there that the most creative solutions are found. Aaron recounted the story of a strike in Mexico among women *maquiladora* workers. He said:

In order to have a legal strike or a definite strike in Mexico, you need the black and red flags. Well, they had decided to go on strike something like about 2 or 3 in the morning, and where would you find red and black cloth? Well, that was the time when women wore more dresses and had slips, so they used red slips and black slips – which is the genius that comes from the people themselves, and I never would have come up with that kind of an answer.

Similarly, Lori described how these communities are “in the trenches – they know what’s affecting their lives and what makes them worse. And their solution to the problems is going to be the solution for the problem at large.” The treadmill of production theory provides somewhat of a contrasting viewpoint on the issue of top-down versus bottom-up changes. Though it implies a need for structural change, which would seem to be an example of the top-down approach, it also emphasizes the importance of grassroots movements, which work from the bottom-up.

Non-hierarchical Structure

An additional aspect of the alternative narrative provided by community advocates is the concept of a non-hierarchical structure, which involves a departure from occupational and organizational hierarchies and stratification. Although respondents were relatively united in their promotion of women leadership, community self-empowerment, and inclusivity, they diverged on the issue of non-hierarchical structures. Part of this separation can be attributed to, what Aaron called, the “tendency to not go very much the democratic route.”

In terms of the farmworker movement, two separate streams of thought emerged regarding how to address farmworker issues. One group advocated for education as a way “out of agriculture.” When asked about the issue of education, Chris said, “How do we tackle the problem of jobs? It’s like we can’t. We need jobs ourselves. We can’t impact the numbers. But we can impact the educational system, and help families, and that’s the way out.” Similarly, Robert questioned how agriculture could be changed. To a certain extent, this group viewed agricultural labor as the bottom of the occupational pyramid, with the most rational solution being to create a way for those individuals to move further up the pyramid. This group did not strongly resist the ideology of occupational hierarchies, which are prevalent within the treadmill of production system. For example, Julia stated that she needed something “better than just being a migrant worker,” describing the “stress” of her current job as justification for its higher status.

Alternatively, the other group advocated against these hierarchies. Within this group, the overall emphasis was on restructuring the occupational hierarchy so that every job is seen as having value. When asked about job hierarchies, Joseph explained:

[W]e don’t want to believe that we have a class system, right? So we have to say something like, “it’s not that bad” or “I work harder” or “my job is more difficult” or “I had to spend ten years getting to where I’m getting by going to school” – that kind of stuff. We have to sort of justify it so we don’t face the contradictions. Especially when you’re coming out of a culture that is not an individualistic culture – that’s more of a collective culture.

This group resisted these sorts of justifications as products of the treadmill ideology.

They discussed how it is a “gift that people have to work the earth” and that agricultural laborers used to have pride in themselves and their work because of the importance of agriculture in the community. Miguel, upon coming to the United States, desired to work

with his hands and not “sell my principles” in the name of education. He stated, “[W]e need to have the right to put price on our sweat the same way that everybody put price on the things they learn in college.”

The issue of non-hierarchical structure is complex. In his description of a land ethic, Leopold described a “pyramid of life,” which was a “tangle of [food] chains so complex as to seem disorderly, yet the stability of the system proves it to be a highly organized structure. Its functioning depends on the co-operation and competition of its diverse parts” (1949:215). For him, each member of the community (human and non-human members) has “respect” for the other members and for the overall system (Leopold 1949:204). Thus, it is unclear whether a non-hierarchical system would be one in which there is no occupational or organizational hierarchy, or whether it is one in which all members are respected and valued.

An Alternative Vision for Food

The final aspect of the “alternative” involves a reconceptualization of food, and the agricultural industry. From Rachel’s perspective, the reality that most farmworkers are unable to afford the produce they have picked is “sinful.” Even for the community advocates who want to buy organic, as described by Hector, the cost is out of reach. He stated:

I do try to buy organic, but I’ll be honest, I can’t afford it. And that’s horrible, you would think that organic would be cheaper because they don’t have to use any poison, any pesticides, anything that’s going to alter the ground, but it’s the opposite. Why? Because it’s mass produced and they probably buy it dirt-cheap and so they can afford to have it cheaper than the organic.

Hawken (1993) argues that it is because the “free market” does not accurately reflect the costs of production that mass-produced food is cheaper and organic food is more

expensive. In this system, “the marketplace gives us the wrong information.... It tells us that our food is inexpensive when its method of production destroys aquifers and soil, the viability of ecosystems, and workers’ lives. Whenever an organism gets wrong information, it is a form of toxicity” (Hawken 1993:56).

In examining this concept of toxicity, several participants discussed the connection between the prevalence of obesity and diabetes in their communities and poverty. Chris stated:

[W]hen you get into a discussion about food, and it’s like, well, per-capita, there’s more fast-food restaurants here than anywhere in the country, and access to fresh vegetables and healthy foods – the access is there but the cost is so much more. You can feed a family with \$10 at Church’s Fried Chicken but if you try to spend \$10 at HEB, you’re not going to get very much with that. So I know why families have to make those hard choices and feed their families, but then [they’re] being impacted when their kids are getting more and more obese.

For both Andrea and Chris, it was the effects of diabetes on their families that inspired them to become involved with community organizations. Resisting the agricultural industry’s treadmill of production has been extremely difficult for community advocates for farmworkers. For example, Veronica mentioned that about 10 years ago, a group of farmworkers in the Rio Grande Valley had grown their own food through an organic farm co-op, but the co-op was unable to survive.

Several respondents focused on describing an alternative system for feeding people: where food is grown locally, people eat seasonally, and future generations know the difference between a “good” strawberry and a “bad” strawberry. When asked about the consequences of our agricultural system, Veronica said, “[T]hey just spray and spray and spray and spray and they have these horrible tasteless strawberries.... And so I think we’ve grown a crop of people who don’t know the difference between a good strawberry

and a bad strawberry. I really do. And that's part of it, right?" Thus, even when they have been unable to defeat the treadmill, these participants resist its advancement by providing a vision for its alternative.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study's exploration of the process of community advocacy for farmworkers in Texas reveals a complex relationship between community advocates and the treadmill of production, where advocates both resist the treadmill and are constrained in their resistance. In terms of limitations to this resistance, factors affecting community advocates include: funding restrictions, the structure of the agricultural industry in Texas, socio-cultural conditions for Texas farmworkers, and limitations to binational/transnational efforts. Community advocates also described factors that furthered their resistance, including: exclusion from the system, integration of human and environmental issues, participation in networks and coalitions, and promotion of an alternative.

Based on the value of food for human societies, the agricultural industry is an essential part of the larger treadmill of production. Yet, there has been limited research on the agricultural industry's role within the treadmill (with exceptions including Novek 2003; Obach 2007; Schnaiberg 1980). In addition, the focus on resistance to the treadmill in the global North centers on the "anti-corporate globalization movement" and a limited labor movement, particularly involving the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (Gould et al. 2008; Obach 2004).

Community advocates for farmworkers in the United States have largely been absent from these analyses.

Perhaps, this issue relates to nature of discussion regarding movements in the global North. According to Gould et al., “what [global] northerners often define as ‘ecological’ concerns (clean water, food security, etc.) are, in fact, at the center of the public agenda for most [global] southerners, but these issues are generally framed in association with poverty and survival” (2008:106). For many farmworkers in Texas, as described by community advocates, their concerns are also “framed in association with poverty and survival.” For example, Andrea discussed the exposure of this population to “third world conditions that led to third world diseases.” Although the results of this study indicate that there are numerous factors hindering resistance to the treadmill within the agricultural industry in Texas, they also identify many factors supporting resistance by community advocates within this “too tough a nut to crack” state. Thus, one of the implications of this study is that it recognizes the potential for finding further global northern participants in a global “movement of movements” who may have been previously overlooked.

Another significant contribution of this study is that its empirical findings integrate theoretical perspectives from environmental sociology, environmental ethics, and sustainability discourses. In environmental sociology, debate has occurred over “realist” versus “social constructionist” perspectives, where realists are concerned about the potential for obscuring the existence of the environment and environmental problems, and social constructionists are concerned about the potential for neglecting the social processes involved in the construction of knowledge and scientific thought (Burningham

and Cooper 1999). This study attempts to synthesize elements of both perspectives by pairing a somewhat realist theoretical perspective with a more social constructionist methodology.

One concern expressed in academic discussions about the treadmill of production theory is that it evokes a narrative of hopelessness rather than motivation. This study attempts to avoid this critique by connecting treadmill ideas with other environmental narratives, such as Leopold's (1949) land ethic, Hawken's (1993) prescriptions for sustainability, and Leiserowitz and Fernandez's (2008) reflections on a new ecological consciousness from the 2007 Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Conference. As a result, this study contributes to a greater understanding of the theoretical application of treadmill theory.

The 2007 Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Conference suggested that scientific research is not value-neutral and that a lack of advocacy by scientists knowledgeable about the ecological effects (including human-related effects) of human systems is "problematic at best and immoral at worst" (Leiserowitz and Fernandez 2008:31-32). In alignment with these views, one of the strengths of this study is its recognized subjectivity. In addition, the methodology of semi-structured interviews allows for a deeper understanding of the variations in experiences of community advocates for farmworkers in Texas. Within some quantitative analyses, the subtle differences between two individual responses can sometimes disappear as a result of the methodology's close-ended structure. Through qualitative research, it is these subtle differences that are carefully explored.

One limitation of this study is its small sample size of sixteen participants. The inclusion of a larger number of participants has the potential to increase the diversity of responses and expand our knowledge on both community advocates for farmworkers in Texas and the agricultural industry's relationship with the treadmill of production. The geographic location of interviewees also represents one of the weaknesses of this study. Twelve of the sixteen interviews took place with individuals who live in the Rio Grande Valley. Future studies could explore the experiences of individuals who represent other agricultural areas within Texas. The intersections of race and gender are also important, and although this study sought to include the voices of men and women from different racial categories, further explorations could expand upon these groups.

One of the significant weaknesses of this study is that interviews were only conducted with community advocates who speak English, which limits the representation of certain social classes and educational levels. The purpose of this study was not to create a hierarchy of community advocates, where certain advocates are given more priority. Due to my own lingual constraints, though, I was only able to conduct interviews in English. Further research should look specifically at the experiences of Spanish-speaking community advocates.

Within this study, there are numerous issues which can be expanded upon in future studies. For example, it would be interesting to explore the potential connection between involvement in community advocacy coalitions and the conception of humans as part of the environment. It would additionally be valuable to study the effects of occupational shifts from agricultural labor to other types of work, in terms of wages, working conditions, family stability, and ecological consciousness. The differences and

similarities between the occupations of farm work and industrial animal processing should also be explored. A longitudinal study could provide more information about trends in advocacy efforts throughout the life course, looking at changes in worldviews and levels of optimism and pessimism.

Several of these respondents discussed the importance of “small victories” in community advocacy. Lori explained how it is these “small victories [that] make people continue working.” In academia, it can be difficult to see the “small victories” resulting from our research. The conclusion of Gould et al.’s book states, “It is our fondest hope that our intellectual work contributes in some small way to the emergence of a new environment-society synthesis and the generation of the means to realize it” (2008:115). Perhaps, we can share in the small victories of these community advocates.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

| Name | Sex | Race | Marital status | Parental Status | Age | Born in US |
|-----------|--------|----------|----------------|-----------------|-----|------------|
| Andrea | Female | Hispanic | Married | No | 54 | Yes |
| Lori | Female | Hispanic | Married | Yes | 57 | No |
| Chris | Male | Hispanic | Single | No | 45 | No |
| Julia | Female | Hispanic | Divorced | Yes | 54 | Yes |
| Elizabeth | Female | Hispanic | Divorced | Yes | 43 | Yes |
| Maria | Female | Hispanic | Single | No | 24 | Yes |
| Rachel | Female | White | Divorced | Yes | 62 | Yes |
| Joseph | Male | White | Divorced | Yes | 62 | Yes |
| Veronica | Female | Hispanic | Divorced | Yes | 65 | Yes |
| Melissa | Female | Hispanic | Divorced | Yes | 28 | Yes |
| Hector | Male | Hispanic | Married | Yes | 45 | No |
| Robert | Male | Hispanic | Married | Yes | 47 | Yes |
| George | Male | White | Married | Yes | 67 | Yes |
| Nicole | Female | Hispanic | Married | Yes | 73 | Yes |
| Aaron | Male | White | Married | Yes | 78 | Yes |
| Miguel | Male | Hispanic | Married | Yes | 78 | No |

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE 1

I. Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. How much schooling have you had?
3. What is your marital status (single, married, divorced, separated, etc)?
4. Do you have any children?
5. Were you born in the U.S.? If so, are you originally from this area? If not, where were you born? When did you come to the U.S. or to this area?

II. Organization and Advocacy Questions

6. In terms of the organization that you work for, can you tell me a little bit about the purpose of that organization and what they do? (ex: goals and day-to-day activities)
7. How long have you been working there?
8. What specifically is your role?
9. With whom do you typically work (not looking for names so much as characteristics)?
10. Is this your first time working in this kind of organization or had you done community activist work before? In what context?
11. What brought you to community work? Was it something that related to your own life?
12. In terms of this organization, what drew you to this particular job or what drew you to advocating for this group of people?
13. What are the benefits or advantages of your work?
14. What are the difficulties or disadvantages of your work?
15. How involved are you, personally, with more regional, national, or binational/transnational (ex: Mexican) advocacy groups?
16. Does your organization work with other organizations (and at any of these other levels)? Why or why not?
17. What went into your decision to participate at the local level [rather than/in addition to] the other levels?

III. Farmworker Issues

18. In terms of farmworkers, what are the biggest issues that they currently face?
19. How do the experiences of female farmworkers differ from those of male farmworkers?
20. How involved are Texas organizations with women farmworkers? Why?

21. In California, there has been some media attention about sexual harassment of female farmworkers; one article said that the women called their workplace the “field of panties.” Have similar complaints been made here in Texas?
22. Among advocacy groups in Texas, is sexual harassment of women farmworkers one of the issues discussed? Why or why not?
23. What, if anything, is unique about the experiences of farmworkers that identify as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans?
24. What, if anything, is unique about farmworkers in Texas?

IV. Environmental Issues

25. What are the main environmental concerns faced by farmworker communities? Are there differences in these experiences (men and women)?
26. Have you observed any differences between the ways that farmworkers think about or relate to the environment and the way that you think other people do?
27. Do you see yourself as part of a global environment? Do you think farmworkers see themselves as a part of the environment?
28. From your perspective, how is your local environment treated by the agricultural industry, the government, and any other groups you want to comment on?
29. How would you say that farmworkers are treated by the companies that employ them? Are there differences between how men and women farmworkers are treated?
30. Do you consider “protecting the environment” to be an aspect of the work that you do?
31. Do you consider your work to be part of the environmental movement (either the mainstream movement or the environmental justice movement)?

V. Responsibility and Solutions

32. In terms of a decade ago, or even a few years ago to today, have things changed concerning farmworkers in Texas? For better or worse?
33. How has NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) affected the lives of the farmworkers?
34. What factors (groups, ideas, circumstances, etc.) do you see as responsible for the problems faced by farmworkers (both small and big factors)?
35. In terms of changes or solutions, what do you think would aid farmworkers?
36. What role do community or grassroots efforts play in improving the situations of farmworkers?
37. Who should be part of these efforts?

VI. Concluding Questions

38. From your perspective as an advocate, what would an ideal world look like for Texas farmworkers?
39. Do you know of any other community organizations or individuals that would be helpful to speak to?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE 2

I. Demographic Questions

40. How old are you?
41. How much schooling have you had?
42. What is your marital status (single, married, divorced, separated, etc)?
43. Do you have any children?
44. Were you born in the U.S.? If so, are you originally from this area? If not, where were you born? When did you come to the U.S. or to this area?

II. Organization and Advocacy Questions

45. Are you currently working for any organizations?
46. In terms of these organizations, can you tell me a little bit about the purpose of that organization and what they do? (ex: goals and day-to-day activities)
47. How long have you been working there?
48. What specifically is your role?
49. What is the makeup of your organization, in terms of race, class, gender?
50. With which groups of people do you typically work (ex: race, class, gender)?
51. What brought you to community work? Was it something that related to your own life?
52. How involved is this organization, or yourself, in more regional, national, or binational/ transnational efforts? Why or why not?
53. Do you see a relationship between environmental, social, and economic justice?
54. Do any of these organizations consider themselves to be part of the environmental movement – does it specify mainstream or environmental justice movement?

III. Farmworker Issues

55. How does your organization work with farmworker issues or agricultural issues?
56. In terms of farmworkers, what are the biggest issues that they currently face?
57. Do you see the experiences of Texas farmworkers as different from farmworkers in other states or countries?
58. With many of the Texas farmworkers identifying as Mexican or Mexican American, do they face different problems than perhaps other groups?
59. Are the experiences of female farmworkers unique? How?
60. Among advocacy groups in Texas, is sexual harassment of women farmworkers one of the issues discussed? Why or why not?
61. Do you think that farmworker advocacy has been more successful in certain states than in others? Why or why not?

62. Which efforts do you think have been most successful in effecting change for farmworkers – ex: targeting consumers, striking, registering people to vote, etc.? What is your opinion on larger structural changes?
63. What are the biggest factors that prevent unionizing in Texas?

IV. Environmental Issues

64. What are the main environmental concerns faced by farmworker communities?
65. Have the major environmental organizations, either national or Texas-based, been involved with agricultural issues in Texas? Why or why not?
66. Do you think there are differences between the ways that farmworkers think about or relate to the environment and the way that people in the major organizations think about the environment? How?
67. From your perspective, how does the agricultural industry, the government, or any other groups you want to comment on, treat the environment in which farmworkers work and live?
68. How would you say that farmworkers are treated?

V. Responsibility and Solutions

69. Several participants have discussed a continuing decline in the number of people working in agriculture in Texas – can you think of any factors that may have brought this about?
70. Some participants have mentioned that these workers have shifted to construction work and service industry work – what changes, if any, do you think this will have? In terms of the environment, what affect might this have?
71. How has NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) affected the lives of the farmworkers?
72. How do immigration laws fit into the equation?
73. Are you involved with the border wall issue – how does it relate to farmworkers?
74. In terms of changes or solutions, what do you think would aid farmworkers and other low-income individuals in Texas?
75. What role do community or grassroots efforts play in improving the situations of farmworkers (especially in terms of structural changes)?

VI. Concluding Questions

76. Do you know of any other community organizations or individuals that would be helpful to speak to?

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