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Crossing Borders: Rethinking Farmworker Education in the California Context

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CROSSING BORDERS:
RETHINKING FARMWORKER EDUCATION
IN THE CALIFORNIA CONTEXT

A Master's Degree Project
by
Ellen Licht

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I am visible -- see this Indian face -- yet I am invisible.
To survive the Borderlands you must live sin frontera
be a crossroads.
(Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands)

You must live sin frontera, without boundaries. How to ground an educational project at a crossroads, at many crossroads? At a place without pre-drawn edges? A wide chasm exists between the dominant culture in California and the culture of social networks in which farm workers move, work and live. This paper attempts to pose critical questions that will describe the chasm, what is lost, as well as what is constructed in that space, particularly as it affects opportunities for innovative educational projects for farm workers. In light of the current anti-immigrant climate in California, and given the fact that farmworkers from Mexico are the backbone of the state’s agricultural economy and that they live, move and work largely within an “underground” world, I propose that a meaningful educational project aimed at both immediate practical skills and long-term strategic goals for adult migrant farmworkers should develop “from the inside out,” starting where farm workers come together already and with the training of community-based literacy facilitators who are “insiders.” The problem of education for adult migrant farm workers as it is outlined in this paper is one example of a larger global phenomenon in education. It concerns a sub-culture which lives and works within (beside/under?) a dominant culture. The sub-culture has a knowledge base that eludes the “standard” measures of the dominant culture from which spring standard educational programs. The fact that we lack “tools to compute the value” of hidden knowledge systems is indicative of the entrenchment of the hegemony (Minnich, 1990, p. 65).

If adult education is to be truly liberatory rather than stifling, if its goal is to be greater power for adults over their own lives and in the social and political contexts through which they move rather than the goal of “breaking them,” then a serious rethinking of the very assumptions upon which adult education programs are built is needed. Such rethinking is not new, but unfortunately its’ application in the real world is. Given the contribution of migrant and seasonal farm workers to our daily livelihood in this country, there is painfully little to be found in the educational literature about them at all, much less anything that might fall under a “critical rethinking.” Certainly, more is happening in
Mexican-American communities than is to be found in the academic literature.

Important links need to be formed and strengthened. There is a need for the “real world” to inform the thinking that lies behind policy-making in adult education. And there is a need for different questions to be posed, by different people, questions that can propel educators and learning communities in more creative directions than the narrow boundaries of English as a Second Language (ESL), literacy and “survival skills” can possibly hold.

The alternative proposed here is the development of community-based education with trained literacy facilitators from farmworker communities. This paper assumes a broad definition of “literacy,” to include both practical and strategic goals as defined by particular learning communities. As part of the rationale, included here is a discussion of “knowledge construction” and how farmworker identity as “aliens” has been constructed by outsiders. An understanding of the networks of mutual assistance developed and navigated by farm workers leads to questioning the assumption that learners are primarily to be treated as individuals. It is important to develop educational programs grounded in these already existing social networks of support and to link them to self-help organizations and to existing community development projects.

In addition, this paper looks at labels and what their language represents, at traditional educational approaches to this population, the link between education and work, assumptions that are made in the dominant U.S. culture about the goals of immigrants and where they are supposed to fit into the larger structure. One of the goals here is to expose the often unspoken map within which people are supposed to fall into their allotted place.

As estimated by the State of California, migrant and seasonal farm workers and their dependents comprise 27% of the state’s low-income population. This discussion of the social, historical and political context of migrant Mexican farm workers in California and critique of traditional educational approaches to the farm worker population will be laced with critical questions that will not necessarily be answered here. The goal is rather to spark creative thinking about alternative approaches to farmworker education in this context. In creating new paths in education, the posing of questions at every step and in every setting is key to insuring that the process is dynamic and connected to the core life of the learning community.

Critical questions, thoughtfully phrased, must be posed in program development and in the classrooms, not always in order to be answered, but rather to propel learning communities along in more creative and deliberately liberating ways. The second half of this paper outlines a series of critical issues to be considered in the rethinking of farmworker education: the issue of bringing out or uncovering within an educational setting local and “hidden” knowledges; the question of educational goals; a section about physical location and other key...
“logistical” factors and the opportunities and constraints that they may pose in the development of an educational project; the issue of “who teaches?” and “who teaches the teachers?” and related critical questions concerning the choice of people who hold these positions; and finally a section on the critical issue of power within the educational project, both in the classroom and at the programmatic level.

In these reactionary times, it is important to resist the temptation to dig in the heels and hold fast. We must not give in to the fear that questioning means “giving an inch.” We must continuously “problematize ourselves” (Marta Zuluaga), lest we lose touch with what is important. “We make the road by walking” ... some questions need to be answered before a program can start. But at some point we need to just jump in and keep asking questions.

THE AUTHOR’S LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

In his critical discussion of the relationship between the identity of “the Orient” as it was constructed by Western writers and the power relationship between the Orient and the Occident, Edward Said stated that: “At most, the ‘real’ Orient provoked a writer to his vision; it very rarely guided it” (Said, 1979, p. 22).

Traditionally, most theories of cross-cultural adaptation, communication and understanding have emerged from the dominant cultures of the world and have failed to take into account the ways in which their positions of power have molded the assumptions and shape of these theories. With this in mind, this work represents the development of my own thinking about farmworker education in California and the critical issues that surround this question. A basic conflict I have faced throughout the process of thinking through and writing this paper is that, in some fundamental way, this work, written by me, an outsider, violates the very principles which I seek to put forth. I do so in an academic environment, where screaming contradictions lie at every turn, so I will graduate and move on, no matter. Yet, I make the claim that the task of redefining farmworker education lies within farmworker communities. My own positioning in the world is distant from these communities in many ways. The greater the distance, the more “unreal” the definitions one assumes. How do we make sure that our thinking comes from a real place? This paper is not the whole truth, but it is a piece of it.

What I see is formed by my outsider position, by social and geographical distance, by unequal political and economic access, and by my own set of lenses. I spent my childhood in motion and as an outsider, in different circumstances from those outlined in this paper, yet deeply affecting how I view the world and the meanings of “home,” “country” and “boundaries.” In addition, my positioning as a woman in the world gives me a particular lens and an impulse to search for and bring to light knowledges that are not validated in this world.
and to understand the power dynamics involved. I have also taken my professional experiences in immigrant and refugee education, and come briefly to an academic setting to learn from other practitioners and from critical language and education theorists about new ways to think about these experiences.

There are roles to be played by advocates and allies. Similarly, there are tools to be found in academic settings that can benefit local community development and alternative education efforts. Collaborations are becoming increasingly crucial in these times of political conservativism. If the luxury of lengthy discourse that is to be found in a University can benefit community-based efforts at advocacy for social, political and economic justice, then it can only be in the role of ally; it can not steer the course.

In surveying the limited literature about farmworkers, the difficulty of coming up with a clear profile of this population emerges again and again. There are variations between the definitions of migrant and seasonal farm workers as well as the criteria for inclusion in each group. For the purposes of this paper, as for many works about this population, a distinction will not be made between "migrant" and "seasonal" farm workers unless a particular point calls for one.

Though I include here my own written reflections while working in the field as a workplace educator, as well as the commentaries of migrant farm workers in that setting, due to the limitations of time and distance this study does not contain a basis of original data. In attempting to gain a clear picture of the world of migrant farm workers, I have used the extensive field research of others whose scenarios and conclusions are based on hard data. The purpose of this work is not to add to this body of data, but rather to contribute to creative and critical ways of thinking about education in this particular context.

_The point is not to attempt now to know reality correctly and finally; the point is to undo those errors in our thinking that quite clearly have consequences of which we no longer approve._ (Minnich, p. 80)

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The following sources have contributed to the information and the path of thinking outlined in this paper:

1. Field notes from the Rural Workplace Literacy Project (1993) and subsequent focus group with farm workers (August 1995);
2. Extensive experience as an instructor and participant observer in the field of English as a Second Language;
3. Review of available literature concerning:
   - the historical, economic and social context of Mexican and Mexican-
American migrant farm workers in California;
• narratives of farmworkers' lives, with a focus on cultural perspectives on health and education, and the making of meaning and of culture;
• existing educational programs serving this population in California;
• definitions and processes of literacy, particularly relating to Paolo Freire and "beyond Freire;"
• theories of knowledge and identity construction, and the impact of education on these processes. Feminist and other readings on the relationships between culture, language, knowledge and power;
• Workplace Education;
• Theater of the Oppressed;

4. Conversations and telephone interviews with researchers, practitioners, farm workers, policy-makers and educational providers in diverse settings (Migrant Headstart, Job Training, community-based educators, labor camp educators, workplace educators).
CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO THE ADULT FARMWORKER POPULATION IN CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION

Although at least 70% of farm workers nationally have limited English skills, less than 10% of the adult migrant and seasonal farm worker population are served by any kind of educational program (Kissam, 1991). As of 1994, 90% of federal funds for this population had recently been allocated to four major programs: Migrant Education Programs (for migrant children, receiving 56% of all federal funds for MSFW’s), Migrant Headstart (for pre-school-aged children and their families), Migrant Health, and job training and related services under the Job Training Partnership Act [JTPA] (Martin & Martin, 1994).

Outlined below are examples of educational programs serving migrant adults. The sampling here is not comprehensive, but serves instead to outline the predominant ways in which farmworker education is approached in California.

FAMILY LITERACY: MIGRANT HEADSTART AND EVENSTART

Headstart is the largest federally-funded family literacy program. With the understanding that parents are their children's first teachers, it seeks to provide them with the training and support needed to nurture in the children the skills they will later need to succeed in school. Migrant Headstart, to be effective, has had to be flexible to the seasonal changes and constraints of physical location inherent in the farmworker work cycle. Headstart is mandated to focus on literacy skills, not ESL, so local Headstart providers are forced to rely on referral services for the many families who do not speak English.

Even Start is a smaller, though similar, national family literacy program. Adrianna Simmons' Migrant Education Even Start Program, La Familia, is one of the few programs nationwide to involve farm workers in planning (Kissam, 1991, vol. 1, p. D2). It is designed to teach literacy, ESL and parenting skills to migrant families with children between the ages of 0 and 7. The scheduling of the classes varies in terms of the seasons, time of day and location. Classes take place in homes, at Even Start centers and in schools. According to Simmons, this flexibility is key to their success in not only addressing important needs, but in
tapping into the resources of the migrant community and providing ownership of the program by the participants. “They work hard in the fields, and come to class, and pretty soon traditional ESL gets very old.” Simmons pointed out that a set curriculum doesn’t work and that the program must center around the needs of the participants. She stressed the importance for flexibility and creativity to be recognized among program funders and in other “official” circles as vital components of educational programs for migrants. She added that in the current political and economic climate, “the success of a program depends on your success from the grassroots” (Simmons, 1995).

**THE JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT (JTPA)**

The Job Training Partnership Act has funded employability development programs through the Department of Labor since the early 1980’s. They provide employment training in a variety of manufacturing and service skills. For adults there is no mandated program called “Farmworker Education,” but they are included in other categories. “More recently they [JTPA] have included upgrade skills training in the agricultural industry,” although less than 5% of farm workers nationally are served under JTPA (Kissam, 1991).

The Center for Employment Training (CET), established in 1967 “expressly to serve farm workers and other low-income persons,” with 22 sites in California, is a model JTPA-funded program. They offer skills upgrading through technical skills and remedial training and requiring no academic prerequisites. They also offer a small stipend to students. Job placement, though not a mandate, is a firm commitment of CET and is often the principal goal of participants, more than a certificate of completion. (Luis Aguilar, personal communication, August, 1995). Nationally, many JTPA programs focus on rapid job placement, though Florida stresses adult basic education and vocational skills (Kissam, 1991, p. D35).

With additional funding to target the needs of injured and dislocated workers, CET can address a fundamental concern in agricultural employment, namely the limited number of years of worker productivity and the high incidence of illness and injury. Under these conditions, job retraining and “employability” become crucial. Still, with centers primarily in urban areas, transportation to classes for farm workers is a problem. According to Luis Aguilar of the San José center, the primary goal of farm workers attending his program is to acquire different skills and get out of farm work. CET does not offer a program specifically for farm workers. They do provide vans which travel up to 1 1/2 hours each way to and from classes.

There has been a major shift in the past 25 years, from programs designed to help US nationals move “up and out” of agriculture to programs that try to help immigrants, “who are finding their way into the US economy through
agriculture" to integrate (Martin, 1994).

WORKPLACE LITERACY

The stated goal of the National Workplace Literacy Program was to “provide grants for projects designed to improve the productivity of the workforce through improvement of literacy skills needed in the workplace” (US Department of Education, 1991).

A structural shift in the American economy from goods-producing to service-producing industries by the year 2000 will put most new jobs in management, sales and service. The number of minorities and women will increase as a percentage of the workforce, and these groups will require training to qualify for jobs requiring further education. In addition to upgrading their basic skills, workers will also need skills for team work, goal setting, problem-solving, as well as participative management. Life cycles for products and processes have been shortened and future jobs may be restructured about every seven years. Continuous learning and reskilling will therefore be a top priority in order to develop qualified people for available jobs. (Fact Sheet, 2/94)

This is clearly not a program designed with migrant farm workers in mind, and yet some farm workers have benefitted from these funds. Under “Literacy and Employability,” Kissam cites specific skills that are likely to be needed in order for farm workers to retain jobs and to move on to better jobs in agriculture. These include literacy and automation, farm management (crew leaders, etc.), occupational safety, and citizenship. He also discussed “acculturation” as “functioning in the formal mainstream work culture of the US” (Kissam, 1991, Vol.1, p. 14-17)

Partnerships of some kind are required for the grant, which suggests links between adult education organizations (community colleges or community-based organizations), unions, businesses/industries (funding makes strange bedfellows...). “By their nature, successful efforts to institute workplace literacy programs require strong partnerships among educators, employers and employees (Adult Learning & Literacy Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 16, 1994). It has been a challenge to find ways to link learning gains to performance on the job, as traditional methods of assessment can not measure this. Elements of exemplary projects which the Department of Education cites in this 1991 report on Workplace Literacy are:

- "teaching materials drawn from actual materials used in the workplace;"
- "instructors with job-related workplace training background;" and
- "availability of support services such as educational counseling and childcare."
Most commonly, Workplace Literacy falls under a “functional context approach”: “The shared goal of being part of (if you are a worker) or employing (if you are an employer) a more highly-skilled workhorse is seen as the unifying factor that supersedes labor-management differences” (Nash, 1993).

Case Study: Workplace Education in a Rural Setting

The Rural Workplace Literacy Project (RWLP) in Sonoma County, California was funded by the National Workplace Literacy grant. Classes were conducted at 30 local work sites, both urban and rural. The objective of the project was to provide learner-centered workplace literacy/ “survival” ESL classes to workers at their work sites.

The project funded an instructor and an aide for each class while management provided a place to meet and some financial incentive for the workers to attend class. This incentive occasionally took the form of release time, but more often consisted of a bonus at the end of the session. The terms of the incentives were representative of the management’s level of commitment and, according to Penny Gallagher, the director of RWLP, had a direct correlation to the success of the program at any particular work site. The mandated requirement for workers to attend 75 hours of classes proved to be unrealistic, an issue which will be discussed further below. The curriculum, which centered around the expressed interests of both workers and management, included both workplace and community-oriented ESL and literacy skills. The preponderance of one or the other tended to depend upon the language most used at the worksite. If, for example, management spoke Spanish, then English was seen as less necessary in the work setting and the focus tended to be more on interactions in the wider English-speaking world. My own experiences and reflections as an instructor in this program are included at various points in this paper as field notes.

CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMS

Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants administered programs offering ESL and Civics, “based on INS requirements for demonstrated English and Civics proficiency as required for pre-1982 amnesty applicants holding temporary resident status who wish to obtain permanent status.” Though originally participants were required to complete 40 out of a maximum of 100 hours of classes, most programs have interpreted this to mean a total of 40 hours of ESL/Civics instruction. In such a small amount of time, the difficulty of incorporating other issues, other than the facts asked for in the test, into the educational setting becomes clear (Kissam, 1991, Vol. 1, p. D30).
The following section outlines some of the critical components of farmworker life in California. It seeks to discuss what is lost and what is created in the chasm that lies between farmworker culture and the dominant culture of this predominantly agricultural state.
INTRODUCTION

Traditional adult education programs do not fundamentally address the critical components of farmworker life.

Literacy, in both theory and practice, is treated as an isolated, hierarchical, and measurable entity, a commodity that is at once deemed necessary for school and later economic success in an English-dominant society but holds no immediately apparent connection to lived experiences and daily struggles.

(Walsh, 1991, p. 8)

Walsh goes on to discuss the fact that a curriculum divorced from real experience and context naturally considers diverse or “different” learners to be a “problem.” Of course, the educational setting is never really neutral, rather its definitions, boundaries and assumptions are based on the “standard,” the members of the dominant cultural group, those learners who have the right “cultural capital” (Bourdieu’s term).

Where does the information and data come from that goes into the making of materials and methodologies for newcomers’ education programs? What is the purpose of the programs? The ESL field nurtures the belief (that many immigrants and refugees share), that if they would just learn English, their life would change. But is that true? If farm workers learned English, would there suddenly not be the demand for cheap agricultural products for consumers and big profits for producers? The following quote from a collection of interviews sums up some of the deep contradictions in refugee and immigrant education in the US:

The [Mexican women living in Los Angeles] we interviewed asserted that learning to read and write English was crucial to getting ahead, and they said that it was unnecessary, for one could get by alright without it, and one could never learn enough for it to make a real difference in their lives (Rockhill, p. 163).

ESL texts tend to “focus on adults’ non-native linguistic deviations rather than on the content of their utterances.” They also claim to be “politically neutral” (Graman, 1988, p. 439) by failing to examine the power relationship
between a “standard” (that defines deviations from itself) and everything else. This critical issue, examined by many researchers over the past decade, feeds increasing dysfunction in a society where the “standard” is spoken by a smaller and smaller minority. The lauding of multiculturalism in US classrooms is not, as it claims to be, an embracing of diversity, but rather a sound of alarm at the recognition that we do not know how to livemulticulturally. “Multiculturalism” fails to examine, much less to question the standard, the place from which “others” are defined and examined.

Farm workers fall heavily into one of the categories of “others,” in ways that will be examined below. The purpose of this section is to outline the distance between the culture of the developers of adult education and these particular “others,” by examining the historical and social context of Mexican farm workers in California, the networks of mutual assistance nurtured within farmworker communities, the power dynamics as they relate to the construction of knowledge in this context and the ways that farmworker identity (“aliens”) has been created outside of the farmworker communities. The section will end with a critique of the type of “immigrant culture” which this society and its adult education system promotes.

HISTORICAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN CALIFORNIA

*If they kick all the Mexicans out, who will grow the food?*  
(Mexican farm worker in California, from the author’s field notes)

*You just can’t get pickers around here that will work like this [...] You ought to see ’em when I really get ’em going.*  
(Grower near St. Louis, quoted in Kalmar, 1983, p. 62)

This labor force, so basic as to pick the food, has historically been hounded by the myth that they are criminals who come to take something away and to contribute nothing of value. At the same time, the history of agricultural labor is composed of repeated patterns of ethnic labor replacement:

We depend on misfortune to build up our force of migratory workers and when the supply is low because there is not enough misfortune at home, we rely on misfortune abroad to replenish the supply (from the Commission on Migratory Labor; quoted in Griffith, 1995, p. 13).

Until World War II, those who have predominantly supplied this particular migratory labor force have been, in succession, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Okies. Since the war, the majority of farm workers in California have been Mestizo, that is, Mexican immigrants of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry, or their children. It is significant that the Okies of the Depression Era
immigration enforcement from 1965 to 1985 helped to maintain a steady flow of workers. Then, in an effort to curtail the numbers of illegal immigrants, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed in 1986, stating that undocumented people who resided in California and could prove that they had been there since 1982 would be granted amnesty. However, a special provision was passed in order to maintain the flow of agricultural labor from Mexico: workers who could show that they had worked 90 days in agriculture between May 1985 and May 1986 could be granted the status of Special Agricultural Worker (SAW). Workers holding SAW cards could cross the border and work legally in agriculture. Initially, many farm workers stayed in Mexico during the 1987 season, waiting to see what the effects of the new law would be and causing a “calamitous shortage of seasonal farm workers” (Palerm, p. 112). Soon, with the loosening of restrictions for agricultural labor, the number of migrant farm workers crossing the border, both legally and illegally, increased considerably following the passage of IRCA. As the word got out that legitimate and fake documents were more accessible, as SAWs helped relatives and friends across the border and into jobs, and as both farm labor contracting and informal networks grew in strength, a labor surplus was created which further undermined the struggle to improve working conditions for farm workers (Zabin, 1992, p. 35; Griffith, 1995, p. 261).

With the increasingly complex system of bureaucratic paperwork and, more importantly, the sanctions against employers that were enacted with IRCA, more and more growers opted to delegate responsibility for obtaining and maintaining workers to farm labor contractors. These operations varied (and continue to vary) considerably, from legitimate and fair businesses to fly-by-night hustlers who could contract the poorest and most desperate workers from across the border for the lowest of wages and the ugliest of conditions, often displacing more experienced, stabilized workers. The linguistic and cultural gap that exists between labor and management calls for a “bridging role” which is often filled by farm labor contractors. Farm labor contractors are usually “intermediaries from the same culture as the workers who essentially manage the labor force (...) Most [of them] today are entrepreneurs whose firms recruit, transport and supervise crews; take care of payrolls, tax deductions and insurance, and sometimes house and feed workers.” During the 1970’s, at the height of the union movement, their importance was greatly lessened. In the 90’s, it has increased considerably once again. Farm labor contractors, with potential control over every aspect of labor migration through the provision of critical support services, “can drive the hardest kind of bargain,” often paying 55 to 85% of the going rate (Zabin, 1993, p. 26-27; Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 231).

The less well-connected workers are, the more likely they must depend upon such “company store” kinds of situations, more common under farm labor contractors than through direct hire. Indigenous Mixtecos from southern Mexico commonly find themselves in situations where “workers are (...) obligated to purchase transportation, services, tools, and occasionally housing from their
employers as a condition of employment” (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 60).

Public consciousness of the plight of farm workers in the U.S. was at a height in the 1960’s with Edward R. Murrow’s documentary “Harvest of Shame” (1960), with the “war on poverty”, the civil rights movement (La Raza), and the growing strength of the United Farm Workers under Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta between 1965 and 1980. Along with unionization came new social programs and the enactment of laws to protect workers’ rights and to improve working and living conditions for farm workers in California. These included policies that fostered such programs as Migrant Headstart, Migrant health and rural legal services. Though some of these large programs still exist, the situation has reversed sharply since 1980 as these laws go unenforced. Programs lack the funding and/or the resources to enforce them. There is a lack of personnel in general, of Spanish-speaking personnel in particular within the appropriate public agencies. This dwindling of public support and concern must be considered along with a 35 to 40% decrease in real wages for farm workers over the last 10 years (Zabin, 1993, p. 34). In addition, conditions have shifted dramatically due to several factors, including the current economic crisis in Mexico, the passage of IRCA, the entrenchment of migratory networks and of farm labor communities in California, and the increased specialization and intensification of the crops. Labor laws continue to go unenforced as there are always people more desperate and willing to work for lower wages and “workers, both documented and undocumented, are hesitant to come forward with complaints because they’re afraid of losing their jobs” (Zabin, 1992, p. 35).

"Why do some gringos like Mexicans?"
(Mexican farm worker in California, from the author’s field notes)

In the fall of 1994, the dark irony of it all came to a head with the passage of proposition 187, reflecting the schizophrenia present in the thinking about agricultural labor. As mentioned above, while the climate vis-à-vis immigrants has shifted back and forth over time, growers have always exerted their political weight in order to ensure the flow of migratory labor. This new proposition brought the society to a new low in making it clear that, while Mexicans were needed as a labor force in California, they were not allowed to have human needs. Proposition 187, as it appeared on the ballot reads as follows:

187. ILLEGAL ALIENS. INITIATIVE STATUTE.
Makes illegal aliens ineligible for public social services, public health care services (unless emergency under federal law), and attendance at public schools. Requires state/local agencies report suspected illegal aliens [...]

The new law went unenforced as it was opposed by immigration advocates and taken to the state court for ruling on its constitutionality. Finally, a year later, in November 1995, it was ruled unconstitutional. While its defeat is a victory for
immigrants and their advocates, Proposition 187 is a kind of barometer, measuring the current climate toward "suspected illegal aliens." What is the impact of being called "alien" on the climate through which farm workers move and work? How does this affect how the farm workers themselves make meaning of their working lives? When does one stop being a "suspected illegal alien"? What kind of labor force in what kinds of conditions develops out of the idea that "they are lucky to be here at all"?

There is a very high fence, as high as this wall here [12-14 feet]. And you have to climb up and jump over, and if you're lucky, you can make it over to the other side, and you start running. Otherwise, La Migra [the INS] catches you and they throw you on the ground and kick you, and they throw you in prison with nothing to eat or drink. When you get out, you try again. It's taking more and more tries to get over now. Guys at the ranch now are saying they spent 12 days on the border trying to get across. It's taking much longer than before (Farm worker in Sonoma County; translated from Spanish by the author).

In the latest chapter of the schizophrenic story of immigration and farm labor, on March 5, 1996, amid tremendous anti-immigrant sentiment, a new guest worker program was approved by the House Agriculture Committee. This is a special amendment to the latest Immigration Bill, an amendment that would "grant temporary work visas to as many as 250,000 foreign farm workers." According to a news report:

Among those favoring the so-called guest worker program at [the] packed hearing were many of the same House members who have clamored the loudest for tighter restrictions on illegal immigration as well as many lobbyists for farmers and ranchers who fear that cutting off the migration across the border would leave them without the workers they need (...)

'All we're asking for is that if there are worker shortages, we can get temporary workers to get through' [vice-president of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association] ... But opponents of the measure, including the Clinton Administration and many farm worker organizations, say there is no farm worker shortage, and that big farming interests are just trying to insure a surplus of cheap, docile labor (New York Times, Wed. March 6, 1996, p. A14).

How to move along under these conditions? There is a growing movement in opposition to Proposition 187 and its effects, a movement of young students strengthened by diverse links to both community-based and academic allies. UCLA is a place where strong coalitions are being built. What role can education for farm workers play in the process of moving forward? In the educational arena, it is important to ask what ends are being promoted and under what guise, questions about who decides what the educational process should be and toward what ends. A brief reexamination of the programs described in the previous
chapter with some critical questions in mind will provide an example.

Family literacy programs that promote “school culture” among pre-school age immigrant children fail to question why the characteristics of “school culture” and of “successful” students in such programs, happen to be the characteristics of the dominant culture. This issue, addressed by critical theorists, will be discussed further below. Similarly, in adult education, it is important to ask what is lost and what is gained in job training programs that focus on rapid job placement. Programs are evaluated in ways that reflect employability standards and their success is based on the number of job placements. What are the issues, strengths, and concerns that are not addressed in such a setting? In addition, criteria for evaluation affects who programs are likely to target. Who are the farm workers most likely to get a different kind of job? What are the consequences of, as is the case for JTPA, participants having to prove legal residence to qualify?

Programs that focus on “integrating” new arrivals into the “mainstream culture,” or even on moving farm workers “up and out” of agriculture, fail to question the assumptions that are made about workers’ goals? Assuming that immigrants’ long-term plans are necessarily to integrate into US culture (whatever that means) render invisible and insignificant the place where they live and the culture that they already hold. The common metaphor of a ladder, and of the most newly- arrived farm workers occupying its lowest rung, implies certain assumptions about where workers are in relation to other workers as well as where they are likely to go if “successful.” These issues will be discussed further below, particularly in the section entitled “Critique of the Type of Immigrant Culture which we Promote.”

The language used to describe programs can be misleading as well. The National Workplace Literacy Program favored a “participatory approach” in the sense of “worker involvement” in planning, assessment and program development. However, it is important to question the meaning of “participatory” in this case. Is the point to extract needed information from the workers in order to better manipulate them? Are “better workers” being created? If so, what does that mean? Does it mean that they will simply fit more pliantly into an oppressive structure? Many workplace education materials focus on “not getting into trouble with the boss,” on fitting smoothly and quietly into the existing structure of work. While this may very well be an important survival-motivated goal (working people, and whole towns back home, do after all depend on their pay for their livelihood), it can also leave unchallenged profound structural injustices.

The issue of education for citizenship is a controversial one on many levels. There are advantages and disadvantages to promoting citizenship as a component of community power. There is the “voting” argument that says: “Don’t tell me who is there, tell me who votes!” From this perspective,
citizenship programs encourage the development of that kind of a voice, if it is exercised. This is important, as Proposition 187 (which seeks to bar illegal residents and their children from health and educational services) has made very clear. As an example of the wide discrepancy that can exist between who lives in a place and who votes, in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, two thirds of the adults are not citizens and are therefore ineligible to vote. As a result, the active electorate there is 75% Anglo while the population is actually 62% Latino, African-American and Asian (NACLA). Along these same lines, Robert Cervantez, currently of the California Department of Education and with many years in bilingual education policy-making, recounted a telling moment. When visited by immigrant education advocates from community-based organizations, a legislator who had historically backed education for immigrants produced a printout of the voters in his district and asked them to count the number of voters who would benefit from their (community-based organizations') services. Cervantez was adamant about the need to “secure an economic toehold” and to become active in the political process:

"Time is on our side. We need time to build a new leadership, a political infrastructure. They [Mexican immigrants] want to become involved but the system is basically against them. But I see a cadre of very hard-working people. I see a cadre of young, articulate, smart, educated people with the ability to get into the economic structure that we've got."
(Robert Cervantez, 1995)

At the same time, there is a danger in being reactive rather than proactive, and the rush to attain citizenship can undermine the efforts to include other things in an educational project. It can also too easily ignore those who are very much part of the “economic structure that we’ve got” in the sense of the structure depending on them holding it up with their bent backs. Needless to say, as Mexican-Americans “secure a toehold,” thereby shifting their position in the economic structure, others will come along to take their place in the fields of California. An educational project that is truly community-based should pose and develop answers to such questions as part of the process.

The current farm worker population in California is composed predominantly of the following sub-groups: 1) Bracero era green card holders from the 40’s through the mid-60’s; 2) first generation U.S-born people, many of whom dropped out of school early and went into farm work; and 3) recently immigrated young people from Mexico and Central America. Within these are other sub-groups (see “Networks”) representing different goals and strengths, opportunities, constraints and desires for educational opportunities. There is considerable variation, encompassing many different factors, within the farm worker population:

"[There is internal differentiation of agricultural labor markets] through a complex of factors related to refugee movements, international"
migrations, language, national origin, ethnicity, race, gender and legal status, [...and further differentiation] by network relations with other farm workers and farm labor contractors [...and more] as they adapt to specific regions and working conditions within regions (...). Each of the internal components of the labor force also involves some access to power and some capacity for resistance. Each, in short, offers a set of rights, obligations and allegiances that colors its members' experiences in the farm labor market and the neighborhoods, labor camps and communities in which they live, even if only for a short while (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 277).

Variations in wages and working conditions creates a clear hierarchy among workers. While the overlying psychological climate of the times is encapsulated in the label “aliens” assigned to this population by the dominant culture, real conditions vary (among labor contractors, growers, etc.). This is an important reminder that the conditions of life, work and movement are not uniform across farmworker populations and that local dynamics must be the starting point for any educational project anchored in the heart of a community.

COMMUNITIES GROUNDED IN A DIFFERENT KNOWLEDGE BASE: EL OTRO LADO

In the dominant culture of the West, a narrow view of what is rational has created educational systems that can make many of us feel inadequate and inept because our ways of thinking, of making sense, are not met, recognized, given external form, clarified and returned to us refined and strengthened (Minnich, p. 111).

What do conventional adult education needs assessments miss because they are grounded in a different knowledge base from the one in which farm workers live, work and move? Are the most firmly committed migrants the group least likely to improve their education since these families have developed specialized economic strategies that do not require English? What lessons are to be learned from these local strategies? What do they offer farmworker communities that formal adult education programs do not?

The border and the ways in which its meaning is constructed is an example and a metaphor for the different worlds of migrant culture and the dominant culture. For Mexicans, crossing the border into the U.S. is called going to the other side, el otro lado:

In Mexico, the border with the United States is everywhere, and economically and culturally speaking, all of us Mexicans live along that border. The hundreds of thousands of migrant workers who go to the United States and who return every year reconstruct and diversify their
country of origin(...). The presence and influence of Chicano culture in Mexico (...), the ties between migrants and their hometowns in Mexico (...). Chicanos perceive the often negative consequences of an extreme attachment to national or regional identities in a “globalized” world that considers identities to be little more than quaint leftovers from a previous era (NACLA, p. 41).

While “rural Mexican and rural Californian communities have become structurally linked, with migration a fundamental part of the livelihood strategies of many households” (Zabin et. al., 1993, p. 13), for the most powerful and vocal part of U.S. society, the border is outside of the circle in the brain which holds “life.” It is the wall of a fortress, to be constantly reinforced, protecting the “best country in the world” from outsiders who can destroy it if allowed in. A more in depth ethnographic study of how different communities make meaning of the border and of el otro lado would yield important material for a discussion of these particular “others” and how their identities are constructed. Such studies can uncover what has been termed “local knowledge” (such labels are extremely telling). A focus on the meaning of the border, on how migrants make meaning of el otro lado vs. what it means to the dominant US culture would lead to some critical questions: What are the structural consequences of a line in the dirt? What are the power dynamics set up by this line? What does the line look like to the different actors that play on its stage?

Deep River
The Rio Grande is a boundary
drawn between real and imaginary.
To calculate its length requires complex analysis
Many backs have got wet, baptized in the big Texan river
Whose length can be charted in miles or kilometers.
many necks have got red, inflamed by nightmares
and visions of apocalyptic terror.
There is a real river and there is an imaginary one.
The wetbacks know one river, the rednecks another.
The Rio Grande runs right through the center of the US;
it courses through the little town of Cobden, Illinois.
It runs between the applicant’s pen and
the bureaucrat’s form in the office of every government-funded agency.
It runs between the pews in church.
It runs along the telephone wires.
Deep river.
(Kalmár, 1983, p. 106)

Some studies of “local knowledge” have been conducted, particularly by researchers with a background in migrant farm work. These uncover local definitions of “health,” of “education,” and of “learning.” A person, for example,
can be “bien educado” without formal education. *Bien educado*, a term that, ironically does not exist in quite this form in English, means something like the teaching of manners and morals by parents and relatives. It is telling that this trait, so basic to Mexican culture, does not count here, that what farm workers are supposed to be doesn’t leave room for something as human as this, and yet it could be argued that the system benefits greatly from the presence of *bien educado*, with its concomitant respect for authority. Rachel Rodriguez’s study of female migrant farm workers and their definitions of “health” is revealing. The women she interviewed talked about the following aspects of life as having an impact on “health”:

- “living in peace” (having no problems with family or with money)
- “dealing with the locals” (feeling unliked, feeling out of place)
- “life in transience” (the risks and unknown of travel, theft, exhaustion and driving)
- “trust” (“talking only with those who could be trusted”)
- “time” (for the things they don’t do for themselves in terms of medical health care because of other demands on their time: “It’s more important to wash the dishes or the clothes to finish quickly and get some rest”)
- “personal involvement” (of medical service providers with the farmworker community in terms of coming to them and of being able to help)
- “relationships with men” (“permission”)
(Rodriguez, 1993).

The dominant, scientific indicators of “health” in this country deviate heavily from these definitions. Just as US dominant culture is exported all over the world while little, by comparison, comes the other way, the “internal colonies,” the many and diverse parts of this culture that are not White upper middle class and male, are virtually unknown to the dominant culture. Chinese New Year is not enough. The fact that the term “Americans” does not include Latin Americans is also telling. The absences are indicative of the hegemony of certain ideas about people from “South of the border,” even if they have been living “north of the border” for several generations, even if they have been here since *before* the border. Again, when do people stop being “suspected aliens”?

The importance of generating critical questions from within in deliberate ways is crucial. The questions are there, as are the social networks, the deliberate comings-together of people. The power of the questions can propel something along. When we think we are being critical educators, we should ask ourselves who is asking the questions that move a project forward. The networks of mutual support through which farm workers move are a natural place in which to ground a project that starts from within, and another place invisible to the dominant eye.
SOCIAL NETWORKS

Now we have temporary permits, so we can cross over, no problem. I fly from San Diego or L.A. to San Francisco and take the bus up here (...) A lot of people fly. If you’re new, there’s a coyote in San Diego to contact. He’ll call up the ranch here and talk to me or to one of the other guys to make sure it’s true that the guy has a job here. Then he’ll front the guy a plane ticket. Then we send him the money by post. (Farm worker in Sonoma County, from the author’s field notes)

The importance of bridging the gap that exists almost universally between educational settings and the psycho-social environment in which students live and work has been discussed by numerous researchers (Street, Heath, Walsh, Trueba & Delgado-Gaitán, Ogbu, Moll, Vélez-Ibáñez and others). Much of this research focuses on the power dynamics of discrediting the home environment of students who are not from the dominant culture, as being, if anything, detrimental to the process of learning and succeeding in school. They also address the importance, in response to the above, of seeing and valuing beyond what we, as educators, are usually trained to value. How does this play out in the social context with which we are concerned here? What are the social networks of knowledge and information that sustain migrant farm worker communities? How can the educational setting contribute to the strengthening of these networks and vice versa?

"Migration from Mexican sending states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Michoacán, and Guanajuato has been going on for some one hundred years (...) Large numbers of households [in Parlier, a community in Southern California] had as many as three generations of individuals who had migrated to the US for work" (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 204). This continuous movement depends upon specific conditions of life and work, and upon “underground networks” in which farm workers move and make decisions about migration and work. Different kinds of households are found within migration networks: households of extended family members comprise some while others are made up of unaccompanied male workers from the same village or area in Mexico. “The key locus of social interaction, reciprocal aid and information is the village of origin in Mexico.” Ethnicity both divides and unites (quoted in Zabin, 1993, p. 9). There are also “switchboard households,” made up of unaccompanied male workers from diverse geographical origins with different migration histories who form networks in the U.S around housing or worksites. These can be seen as “more chaotic”, and a weaker network, and yet each member has different information to offer the group in terms of jobs, working conditions, wages, means of transportation, labor contractors, etc. (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 217).

The inherent insecurity in this type of labor, the struggle to obtain enough hours of work each day and to maximize the number of days of work during the
peak season, as well as the high incidence of "network recruitment" explain the considerable investment in developing and nurturing these networks. In Working Poor, David Griffith and others try to grasp the factors that influence the supply and recruitment of farm labor. As they and others (Zabin, Palerm) discuss it, the scenario through which migrant farm workers move is one which eludes standard measures of labor markets and of human behavior ("standard" meaning those measures developed and used by the eaters of the food, not the growers of the food). "...The working environment in which America's immigrant working poor spend their days is part of a global economy -- an agora overlaid with multiple social and conceptual geographies -- literally and figuratively a polyglot workplace" (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 274). The decisions to be made and the steps to be taken around moving and working, about housing, transportation, family and legal issues within the context of a transnational life are many and difficult. They are also risky. The costs of periods of unemployment and of searching for profitable work are high and include transportation and investigating work possibilities that may or may not prove worthwhile. "Key concerns in farm workers' economic strategies involve managing the inherent insecurity of farm labor employment" (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 229). The family and other social networks that develop among this population are absolutely essential to this life of movement and work. The intricacies of this world of networks evades formal information-gathering techniques. Because of low wages, high costs and great uncertainty, and because the workers bear the costs of a highly seasonal production cycle, the importance of the workers' "migrant social network" can not be minimized (Zabin et al, 1993, p. 85).

These networks serve many important socio-economic functions: they help to protect individuals and single families against an uncertain and fluctuating economic situation, they help workers to "penetrate" labor markets, and they form systems of support and assistance to a population that is unlikely to seek assistance from formal institutions. These networks share and exchange what Luis Moll calls "funds of knowledge." "Every household is, in a very real sense, an educational setting in which the major function is to transmit knowledge that enhances the survival of its dependents" (Moll, and Greenberg, 1990, p. 320). Knowledge does not flow one way. Assumptions upon which educational models are based miss the complex dynamics involved in families and other social networks. It is critical to ask what it is that educators don't see that is key to understanding the dynamics. If, as this paper argues, an educational community should most logically spring from the places where adults come together to assist each other in the natural flow of their lives, these networks are the places to start. In sharp contrast to the conventional educational portrait of individual learners, isolated and out of context, the economic and political conditions outlined above create an extremely complex structure through which migrant farm workers maneuver.

Since the 1940's, "Mexican farm workers" in California in fact has been an
extremely heterogeneous group in terms of income levels, employment, time of settlement or of migration in the US, place of origin, etc. There is considerable diversity among seasonal migrants as well. Along with other researchers of this population, Juan Vicente Palerm of the Chicano Studies Center at UCSB is strongly against the argument that different categories of workers represent stages along a continuum. They are, rather, groups that are evolving differently. In addition, developments in the last ten years have contributed to a changing scenario among this shifting population. Contrary to the myth (often an assumption in immigrant education) that agricultural laborers eventually move "up" into urban employment, Palerm documents the fact that "city life is no longer perceived by many immigrants as a golden opportunity to ensure mobility and economic well-being." The present urban realities of violence, gangs, drugs, low-paid jobs, high cost of living, especially housing, "may actually represent a deterioration of living conditions vis-à-vis the rural/agricultural environment" (Palerm, 1991, p. 104). In addition, the tremendous increase in demand for labor-intensive specialty crops has contributed to somewhat of a stabilization of the labor supply, documented by settling of farm labor communities in California during part or all of the year, and by the increasing sophistication of trans-national networks. However, this "stabilization" is not actually stable. The economic crisis in Mexico as well as the politics of immigration in California have contributed to an oversupply of labor and to the de stabilization of the farmworker setting, undermining the struggle for better working conditions.

Palerm goes on to document bi-national families which include US-based and Mexico-based parts, and the flow of mutual assistance between them. Remittances from the US contribute to building homes, businesses and farms in Mexico while the US-based parts of families make up a support system for migrant workers in the family.

Recruitment of farm labor relies so heavily on the extended family or village and the artificial network support systems [unaccompanied males, from new sending areas] that working in farm work requires that potential farm workers know and successfully function within 'the rules of the game' of these systems. This aspect of the 'working conditions' of farm work is, in large measure, one of the most important barriers segmenting the current farm labor market from many other portions of the US labor market (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 234)

It is also the most important facilitator for moving into other harvests and other geographical locations for work and sometimes settlement. As working conditions and wages have deteriorated since the early 1980's, the networks have become all the more critical:

... [The] sporadic stringing together of jobs from season to season feeds continued underemployment and continued demand for formal and
informal support networks. Households of unaccompanied males, dorms, labor shape-up areas, and the work sites themselves provide switchboards for exchange of information and misinformation about work, border patrol enforcement, and forums to discuss different courses of action for finding more work (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 264-5).

It is important to keep in mind the highly dysfunctional structure which is the context for all of this -- dysfunctional, clearly, in terms of humane-ness, but also from a point of view of productivity:

Reliance on recently immigrated, illegal, unaccompanied-male migrants also appears to subtly shift labor management emphasis away from worker productivity (rate and quality of work) and toward worker compliance (willingness to accept marginal working conditions and reluctance to leave an employer). Such a shift in labor management emphasis is dysfunctional in terms of industrial competitiveness. Under this system, savings stemming from the ease of recruiting and retaining the most compliant workers are traded for lower productivity (Griffith & Kissam, 1995, p. 260).

What is the relevance of social networks for educational programs? The past decade has seen the proliferation of writings by literacy and other education theorists who stress the importance of learners' communities. Arlene Fingeret, for example, writes about the social networks in which literacy learners live and the importance for educational programs of starting with this, not looking at learners as individuals, isolated and out of context. Theorists like Fingeret are not novel at this point in time. Still, the application of such theories is rare (Fingeret, 1983).

KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION AND POWER

*Ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied.* (Said, 1979, p. 5)

The gap between home and school culture and how its is perceived as, at best, two different worlds of knowledge, one better than the other, or, at worse, the stance that sees schools as the place of knowledge, and home (or rather, certain homes) as lacking in it. This is exemplified in the debate about family literacy. There is a great injustice in family literacy being defined as performing school-like activities at home in order to support success at school. It is a profoundly political stance of promoting a particular culture, the culture of the schools, the values of the dominant culture as the norm, in what is actually a profoundly multicultural society. It is a terrible invisible power, invisible because so pervasive, of defining what is real, what is knowledge. The socio-cultural
context of the family becomes a series of "obstacles to be overcome so that learning can take place" [...] Similarly, Kathleen Rockhill addresses the problem with bringing community literacy into mainstream ESL: "Lodged firmly in liberal conceptions of the rational individual and benevolent state, it is argued that the way through structural inequities is to bring 'marginal' adults into the mainstream." (She also discusses "how this ideology was used to obliterate working-class education in the US") (Rockhill, 1993, p. 162).

"If, on the other hand, educators define family literacy more broadly to include a range of activities and practices that are integrated into the fabric of daily life, the social context becomes a rich resource that can inform rather than impede learning." "The teacher's role is to connect what happens inside the classroom to what happens outside so that literacy can become a meaningful tool" (Auerbach, 1989, p. 166). Auerbach proposes that the direction of curriculum development should be from the community to the classroom rather than the reverse, with home knowledge contributing to rather than conflicting with the learning that takes place in school (Auerbach, 1989, p. 176-177).

Who poses the questions that propel the project along? This question is critical. Who has the skills to develop an educational project from the inside of a community out? In her subsequent work, From the Community to the Community, Auerbach puts her ideas into practice. She documents an educational project in which participants in immigrant and refugee ESL programs are trained to be the facilitators of the classes in their own communities.

What kind of knowledge counts in an ESL class? The mythical world represented in many ESL texts resembles more closely the myth of "America" in which so many in the world believe (everybody is rich and happy, without troubles or worries -- a message that crashes into homes and communities in the remotest of places through the U.S-produced media) than it does real life in this place. The knowledge that counts is not about the twists of history and root causes and the terrible ironies of this world. The knowledge that counts, the newcomer is told, is getting those verb tenses right. That's the key. With that, the world will drop at your feet.

The implicit message is that with the right knowledge, that is, the correct English words, the learner will be like the people in the texts - - materially comfortable, not needing to work, living almost exclusively to have fun in a world without discrimination or struggle, a life full of work-free weekends! Hidden messages in the text reflect not only "what the world is like" but also "what we are supposed to talk about". Many of the dialogues are on the level of superficial chit-chat. They contain nothing of substance. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the place of such chit-chat in mainstream U.S culture. What is important here is not that a fair amount of that type of talk is expected here, it
is rather what is missing from it, and the way that it allows the people in the classroom to avoid critical issues.

Knowledge in this setting is the "English language": the grammar and vocabulary, but also, more abstractly, the value system and rules of behavior, "how to live here like you belong". The assumption is that the more language a student acquires, the more he or she can participate. Status in the classroom is acquired as ones' language skills improve vis-a-vis other participants. But what about the transference to the world outside the classroom? What factors increase one's status in the farmworker community? Do the same factors increase their status in the classroom as well? Knowledge of how to buy things (often a focus of ESL texts) demonstrates a kind of acculturation. As Bourdieu states, it is not enough to acquire the "cultural capital", i.e., the language. "Symbolic capital" is also needed, that is the means to use the cultural capital to access other gains, gains which will shift one's position in the hierarchical framework. The idea that one can single handedly shift in this way is part of the mythical ideology of this country. Throughout the history of the United States, this myth has persisted, and at the same time, the reality has been that the status and power of any particular immigrant group has depended upon the status and power of all of the others. As each new wave of immigrants comes in, it takes its place at the very bottom rung of the ladder, bumping the group formerly at the bottom rung just slightly up.

ESL is positioned as the "gateway to the American way of life". What are the myths and realities inherent in this construction? The belief is strong that learning English is the "key". This is the knowledge that must be acquired to "get ahead" here. Acquiring the knowledge that newcomers need to avoid getting lost in the streets is one thing. Acquiring knowledge that leads to some kind of power or control over life is another. Do ESL classes help to blur the distinction? Do they convince newcomers that the power over little things that they can gain through English words is the same as power over bigger things? That "getting lost" only happens on one, concrete, graspable level?

Implicit in this discussion is the relationship between what goes on in the ESL classroom and what goes on in the world outside. Some ESL texts currently on the market attempt to bring the "reality" of the newcomer's U.S. experience into the classroom. In doing so, they bring in issues such as discrimination, low-paying jobs, negligent landlords and lack of recognition of many immigrants' status as professionals in their home country. And yet, as Elsa Auerbach asserts in her article *The Hidden Curriculum of Survival ESL*, the manner in which these issues are brought up in the text is crucial. In assuming that the newcomer's experience is that of subservience, are these texts not prescribing subservient behavior? With a more critical, problem-posing stance, a text could be used to elicit choices. Far fewer ESL texts take this approach. Furthermore, if the setting in which constant "error correction" occurs is the "gateway" to life in a different culture, how much will the way a learner carries herself in the culture
be defined by this learning process?

This educational process must be grounded in dialogue about the meaning of power and its encoding in language, which indicates a role for critical language studies (Fairclough, 1989, p. 235).

The positioning of an immigrant, especially a non-European immigrant, in the U.S is that of a less powerful “other”, less powerful than those who “belong”. To come back to Fairclough this experience is strewn with “powerful participants controlling and constraining non-powerful participants”, constraints including content of discourse, relations between subjects and positions available to them (Fairclough, p. 46), that is, just about everything. This is a troubling thought in this country of immigrants. Moreover, the great power of it lies in its invisibility, in the taken for grantedness of it.

Like ESL, “literacy is treated as though it is outside the social and political relations, ideological practices, and symbolic meaning structures in which it is embedded” (Rockhill, 1993, p. 162). In his doctoral work on power and local economic knowledge, Sanz de Santamaria makes the critical point that nothing of conventional power dynamics changes when the process of knowledge production and the process of knowledge circulation are “carried out as different moments, separated in time and space” (Sanz de Santamaria, 1987, p. 127). He claims that only knowledge that is produced and grounded in the concrete conditions of peoples’ daily lives can “become an effective weapon to be used by people to transform the conditions that secure the reproduction of their exploitation” (Sanz de Santamaria, p. 316) or any kind of “action to effect the economic development of a community” (Sanz de Santamaria, 1987, p. 126).

“Better schooling leads to better jobs” may be true for the white population in the US, but is not necessarily true for Blacks or Mexicans. The differences lie in socioeconomic status that come about because of job ceilings, as opposed to differences in educational attainment. It has been argued that the job ceiling against Mexican Americans contributes to their low performance in school by training them for low-status positions in the workhorse. The belief that learning English alone would get people better jobs contributes to the fact that the failure of non-elites in education is not done just at school or at home. “It is done everywhere.” It points to the re-education of teachers that is needed, so they can engage their students where they live (Delgado-Gaitán, 1987, p. 12).

Beyond this, there is a need to stretch definitions, to redefine who teachers are supposed to be. It is not only what educators say that is important, it is who the educators are and who they are perceived to be by students and by the communities in which they work. This world, and particularly U.S society within it, is unfortunately terribly, cruelly, stratified by race and ethnicity, by dialect and culture of origin. We carry this with us whether we like it or not. The same teachers allowing other voices to be heard does not change the power
structure. Redefining the qualifications of a teacher, on the other hand, could mean genuinely valuing those things that have not traditionally been valued in this society. We must ask who decides what is allowed.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: "ALIENS"

"...report suspected illegal aliens"
(from the text of Proposition 187)

One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away (...) Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is a veridic discourse about the Oriental, (which it claims itself to be) (Said, 1979, p. 6).

If the word "Oriental" is changed to "Alien" and "Orientalism" to "Alienism," we begin to see the consequences of the language of Proposition 187. The ways in which this point applies to education were stated by Freire in The Politics of Education: "Every educational practice implies a concept of Man and the world." In terms of literacy, there is "the Illiterate as an empty man" (to be filled with knowledge that comes from an Other). There is also "the Illiterate as the marginal Man," which makes the assumption that learning to read and write will bring the learner into the center, from which he has been distanced. Freire counters that, in fact, "they are not 'beings outside of' but 'beings for another,' oppressed within the structure. They therefore cannot be liberated by being incorporated into the structure." This is different from his own definition of the literacy process as an "act of knowing," where learners are creative subjects and the learning and the process belong to them (Freire, 1985, p. 43-48). Freire also discussed the fact that if one is not part of the dominant group, then one is defined in terms of the dominant group, in terms of others, as "being for the other," not for oneself. Opportunities for defining one's own reality are practically nonexistent within a structure that benefits the hegemony to one's detriment.

But, beyond Freire, some theorists have attempted to problematize the current definitions of "empowerment" and of the goals of education within liberatory agendas. "Those who argue for literacy in terms of empowerment do not challenge the dominant ideology which constructs vast numbers of people as illiterate, thereby rendering them powerless" (Rockhill, 1993, p. 163). Gathering vast numbers of people together under labels creates the "other." It is important to be critical in thinking about an educational knowledge-base that feeds the identity of migrant farm workers as "other." The way to unpack and reconstruct knowledge about a community is from within it, through developing a power base from which to create knowledge that is meaningful, useful, validating and,
perhaps, that challenges the hegemony. There is a need to unpack conventional identity construction and bring farm workers to the center of the educational project, not just as recipients. This entails breaking through the separation that exists between education and the real world outside, not just by starting with the real conditions of learners’ lives, but, as in Participatory Action Research, by eliminating the gap between educational projects and life projects, or social or political projects. It entails putting into practice what Freire and other critical theorists have argued about education not being something that goes from people who know things to people who don’t.

For the very word “alien” to be used in common everyday language is possible because of the hegemonic knowledge system that constructs “their” identity as “other” (could any other word be more blatant?) Adapting Edward Said’s poignant statement about “the Oriental,” brings us to question “the nexus of knowledge and power creating ‘the [Alien],’ and in a sense obliterating him as a human being” (Said, 1979, p. 27). Migrants are one of the many sub-cultures (a term to be questioned in and of itself) in the U.S. that share “otherness,” implying that “they” do not deserve better, but more than that, that they are somehow sub-human. Animals and products are carefully tended to until sold to consumers. Workers are indispensable as an institution, but dispensable as individuals because there are always more where they came from and their identity is defined by others in this way.

It is crucial to point out that the idea that the formal education system “has not and will not educate Third World people” (Añorve, 1989, p. 36), that it is in fact a sign of the triumph of the formal school system that most Latino kids (for example) are in Special Education classes, because the system was never set up to educate them in the first place. This was in fact Paolo Freire’s response to Donaldo Macedo when asked why, in this country with so many educational resources, there was such astounding failure, and Freire replied: “Donaldo, you don’t understand! It’s not the failure of the system, it is the triumph of the system” (Macedo, 1995).

At the same time, is “el otro lado” considered a foreign country by Mexicans who cross the border regularly? Not really. It is not outside of the circle in the brain in which “life” is placed. Upon arrival (or even before), they are viewed, at worst, as criminals, dogs to be hunted down and booted out, or worked until useless. There is also the false belief that they are predominantly welfare recipients. At best they are seen (including by educational programs) as the oppressed, the victims, the downtrodden, having nothing, needing to be given something. Neither takes into consideration the real world in which they move or the ways in which they themselves make meaning of their lives.

... a new understanding of the nature of identity actually opens up the possibility to ‘set about creating something else to be,’ as Toni Morrison writes of her two heroines in Sula (Minnich, 1990, p. 146)
There is a different culture of definitions and meaning-making than the one from which springs forth the profession of teaching immigrants in the U.S. This culture, in fact, is not static. It has been argued that the culture of migrancy is being created everyday, that it is always shifting, both literally and figuratively, due to the political climate, migration patterns, Mexican economic conditions, trade agreements, floods, droughts, and the variable composition of the farmworker community. The different definitions of "good health" mentioned above as well as the sociology of transnational communities reveal different patterns of work, residence and identity which are contrary to the assumptions about migration leading inevitably to immigration, citizenship, cultural assimilation, and upward economic mobility" (Zabin et. al., 1993, p. 32).

At the same time, traditional literacy and ESL texts do a great disservice: "By relying on words that transmit an ideology of accommodation, such literacy work reinforces the 'culture' of silence that dominates most people. This is, of course, an alienating experience, incapable of contributing to the process of transforming reality" (Freire, 1985, p. 9). The Culture of Silence is born in the relationship between the ones with the power and the ones without it. Freire quotes José Luis Fiori, in a letter to him: "It is not the dominator who constructs a culture and imposes it on the dominated. This culture is the result of the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators" (Freire, 1985, p. 72).

CRITIQUE OF THE TYPE OF IMMIGRANT CULTURE WHICH WE PROMOTE

"If not completely 'invisible,' farm workers are, at best, perceived by policymakers only through the distorted lens of assumptions about standard work behavior and life strategies" (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 238). In this vein, the study entitled "A Narrative study of High Achieving Women from Migrant Family Backgrounds" by Marhoun uses narratives to make the case that women from migrant family backgrounds who succeed academically in the US are in the process of stretching boundaries, of taking elements from their own and from the dominant culture to create culture and their own way to be, both in their own and in the dominant culture:

... the participants can be viewed as engaging not only in the establishment of self-identity, but in culture-making, [specifically, their] negotiation of a reality that integrated incongruent cultural elements and possible relationships to academic achievements (Marhoun, 1993, p. 167)

Certainly, culture is always fluid and shifting as people make and remake it, as they negotiate the crossing over between communities and between worlds of values. However, the danger of an analysis such as Marhoun's, who is an example of the predominant position in this country, is that she leaves out the
political. By doing so, she in fact takes a very clear political stance, all the more
dangerous for not being acknowledged. Marhoun ["You don't just understand!"]
does not address the possibility that "the system was never meant to educate
such people." She argues that adopting values from the dominant culture
allowed some Latina women to succeed despite their Mexican heritage. She does
not address why it is that the values of higher-achieving students are the values
of the dominant culture. "The assumption that 'obstacles' should (or can) be
taken care of as a precondition to participation may result in reinforcing the
advantage of students who come from the least complicated social contexts"

The problem is not one of deficit in the family environment but one of
differential usage and power (Auerbach, 1989, p. 173)

It is important to question the type of "immigrant culture" which we
promote in and through the benevolent educational programs that are made
available to recent or not-so-recent arrivals. What roles do we encourage? What
myths do we insidiously teach? We must cultivate an alternative to the message
that says "come in, come in, if you do it this way we'll let you in" and yet the
wall stays up. The demand for cheap agricultural products grows, while racism
grows amid talk of "multi-culturalism." It is a schizophrenic climate.

The particular conditions of farm worker's lives tend to encourage the
conviction that only educational programs specifically addressing their needs
and context can make a difference to the conditions of work and life of this
population. And yet, when isolated in special educational settings, are farm
workers further marginalized from the "rest" of the society, limiting even more
their interactions with the diversity of people living in this country, raising even
higher the barriers to communication and mutual understanding, along with
the barriers to diverse employment options?

As Minnich put it, there is a "lack of tools to compute the value" of what
has been missed for so long, of the things that lie outside of the hegemony. What
questions do we ask that will help us to develop the tools? How to forge new
paths?

To change the curriculum is by no means to change only what we think
about. It is to begin to change who and how we are in the world we share
(Minnich, 1990, p. 80)

This paper seeks to maintain the importance of facilitating an arena that helps us
to think about things, and imagine things, to not always jump right to what we
know can be done. "We can simply hold that humans are capable of thinking
ideas that they can not know." (Minnich, 1990, p. 95)
CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL ISSUES IN PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

There is something to lose in any change in what we take to be knowledge, just as there is something to gain: power is at stake here, including the most basic power of all, the power to define what and who is real, what and who is valuable, what and who matters. (Minnich, p. 173)

INTRODUCTION

This section seeks to uncover key critical questions to pose in the process of developing community-based educational programs with adult migrant farm workers. They are divided into specific issues and are meant not as an outline for program development, which should come from specific contexts, but rather as a series of questions to consider in rethinking the outlines and content of farmworker education. Critical questions of power and knowledge, of purpose and possibility are needed at every level, from program design to what happens in the daily life of a learning community in order to propel a project along in innovative ways.

UNCOVERING HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE, MAKING NEW KNOWLEDGE

But while it may well be the case that it is important now to decenter by deuniversalizing man-as-subject, and/or author, and self, it is just as important to center as subject those who have survived subjection for so long. We have not only been acted upon; we have acted; and it is time that we claimed the authorship and authority, the selfhood and subjectivity, that we have created and can create. We need not and indeed can not do so in the same terms as the hegemonic culture. Those terms have been defined in contradistinction to us; we can not just add ourselves to them, or adopt them for ourselves. But we can find our own stories and wisdom, our actions and creations, our struggles, the ways we have indeed genuinely and fully lived within and without the dominant system (Minnich, 1990, p. 145).

There are many constraints in the lives of migrant farm workers, and there
are tremendous strengths as well. While many of them work and move through highly oppressive situations, the "culture of migrancy" is not a culture of deprivation. It is important that this be the outlook of any education provider that aims to be truly relevant to the lives of this population. The networks of information and support on which migrant farm workers depend in order to do what they do are the place to start in building the deliberate comings-together that are the life of a learning community.

It is currently popular for teachers as researchers to do ethnographic studies about their students in an effort to bridge the gap previously mentioned between home and school cultures. The question remains, however, of who asks the questions, who defines and creates the knowledge, who "reads" it. Transforming the power dynamics within an educational project requires acting upon the understanding that, whatever is advocated, whatever is claimed, the people who define what knowledge is and create what is taken to be knowledge in a given context are the people who hold the reins.

The word "hidden" is used here because the very real internal dynamics, strengths and resources of the community are often not seen, much less understood by migrant educational service providers, who are almost universally outsiders. "Hidden" is a risky word to use. Hidden from whom? We run across the problem of defining a group of people in terms of their relationship to a dominant social structure to which they are invisible. Here, I mean hidden by conventional immigrant education strategies. The goal in this paper is to pose critical issues that will promote farmworker communities in naming their own reality, not having it named by the dominant culture. This implies starting with "what is there" and building on it in directions that the community of learners define, instead of starting with the idea of adaptation, which is the predominant assumption of immigrant and migrant education in this country.

The notion of starting with the concrete realities of learners' lives is not new. Paolo Freire has devoted his life to defining what this means and how it can come about. Freire, however, has his own clear agenda for where the project should lead. While a Freirean analysis of an adult learning community is useful, in trying to move beyond Freire, a community's goals should be determined internally. Freire points to the notion that a "culture of silence" results from the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators (Freire, 1985, p. 72). This begs the questions of where do we start? He reminds us that education is needed at every level, that the dominant culture, in fact, should be the target of a mass education campaign that chisels away at the mythology of the "underbelly" of our society. In advocating for more meaningful educational opportunities for farm workers, it is important not to fall into a stance that sees the deficit in the recipients of the educational project. The word "recipients" should be eliminated along with the role that it suggests. What if the "recipients" are also the creators of the project? Let us remember that people educate
themselves, and that education can and should be a much more complex process than the conventional definition would give it, or even than the critical theorists would give it. What happens to the consciousness as it grows and changes is not really understood nor is it controllable. Deep down, educators know this -- that they will never really know the impact that they have. How to create an educational project with, by definition, no end in sight?

Freire, Fals-Borda, Gramsci and Shor, among others, discussed the uses of participatory action research in the production of new knowledge, of a counter-hegemony. What are the indigenous networks of communication and what kinds of literacy and learning events occur in the natural flow of life? How can deliberate literacy practices be explored and developed from this vantage point?

In Ira Shor's words, learners are "critical actors who make meaning." On the subject of integrating "critical" and practical skills, he notes the following: "Skills are not transferred mechanically or uncritically, not isolated from student subjectivity and global issues (...) ]Learners evaluate both the limits and potential of the skill and the training for the key is to absorb direct skill instruction into a wholistic format of dialogue and reflection" (Shor, 1993, p. 120). Similarly, Delgado-Gaitán states that people know the available resources, they know what they can use. Revisiting the powerful quote summarizing interviews with Latina women in Los Angeles, "[they] asserted that learning to read and write English was crucial to getting ahead, and they said that it was unnecessary, for one could get by alright without it, and one could never learn enough for it to make a real difference in their lives." What would make a difference? What information? What is it that, if you know you have it, things are better? Is it not something like confianza? This is also the basis upon which the networks are built. We must be careful at the same time not to equate better conditions for farm workers with their acquiring a certain type of information (we fall the back into the place where traditional adult education programs lie) ... if only they learned how to speak English, how to fill out job applications, how to open a bank account, things would be better, not to forget that it is the agricultural economy that is structurally balancing on their backs.

What has been termed the "hidden transcript" is a discourse that is owned by the community, a way to exert control over their own lives, not visible or understood by the larger structure. Some forms of African-American dialect are an example. There is value in being hidden. This too can be a form of resistance. This is an example of the "ploys" used by the oppressed ... necessary "in the struggle against invasion by the dominant culture" [...] "The cultural expressions which show the way in which they understand their situation and how they defend themselves, should be the starting point for these plans [of action]" (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 43). Linking an educational project to these ploys assumes a redefinition of who the "problem" is. Can this be done with an educator from the outside, one whose formative experiences are not the same as those of the learning community? Perhaps it can, but should it? The experience
of always going through a third party promotes the "erosion of individual and community esteem" (Kissam, 1991). How to create a project of possibility for communities to address, on their own terms, the historical, political, economic and social issues of their lives. That this should be a "challenge" is evidence of how far conventional educational strategies are from building up "marginalized" people as opposed to beating them down.

An understanding of "how adults learn" assumes the given that adults are experts about their own lives. "What have you taught someone?" is as important a question as "what do you need/want to know?" Finding ways to programmatically value and start from prior learning that hasn't been formal is crucial.

Stories provide important clues to what is going on. In a crisis or a situation, we need to ask "What story do we tell in order to make sense of this?" Stories can expose the heartbeat in lives that are bi-national and bi-cultural and in the "culture of migrancy." Farm workers belong to more than one culture, to their own culture, one that is made everyday. Understanding what this means in terms of the daily living of it is very important, as is grounding the educational experience in this reality. Exploring, through theater, stories and problem-posing approaches, the analysis and choices that go in to this culture-making are an important way to validate and explore the road that migrant farm workers walk.

Perceptions of schooling, education and learning are also important to understand. According to research by Velázquez, negative past experiences with schooling, perceptions of school and schools' low expectations of migrant students mean that adults are often not drawn to adult education classes. And yet, this does not mean that they do not want their children to stay in school. "Adult education is not synonymous with learning." The participants in her research project tended to equate learning with "being able to do something with their lives" (Velázquez, 1993, p. 124-125). There is considerable new research and literature in the field concerning resistance to education. Some components of the "culture of migrancy" as it affects participation in educational activities are the following:

- gender roles (expectations that men will support their families and that women will have children);
- adult-child roles (children often drop out of school early to work and to care for siblings)
- dealing with social institutions (not understanding the system, pride in independence, not knowing who can help)
- powerlessness and the migrant cycle (a feeling of fate, of being trapped, little hope of changing life)
- attitude toward authority (respect for schools and teachers, don't tend to challenge them)

(from Prewitt-Diaz et. al., quoted in Velázquez, 1993, p. 40-43)
It is important to question such definitions, and to rewrite them from other than a deficit framework. Nevertheless, negative experiences with schooling and the pressures that migrant children feel when torn between the culture of school and the culture of migrancy do spill over into resistance to any adult education program that mirrors traditional school structures.

The impulse to define what “farmworker culture” is or is not in opposition to conventional definitions should not fall into the same narrow trap that eliminates “the wisdom of uncertainty” (Milan Kundera, quoted in Schaafsma, 1993, p. 8). Instead of looking for one answer it is important to ask how people’s stories contain their theories of life and the work that they do as well the values that shape the choices that they make. There is not one truth. Perhaps only stories can capture the truth in our increasingly multicultural and complex society. How can educational projects reflect and hold the “messiness” of history and of the process of knowing? There is “value [in] multiple perspectives for capturing the complexity.” This translates into, on one level, preserving diverse voices. On another level, it means respecting the multiplicity of voices in each person’s experience and respecting unknowability. Not to know and define (in “rational ways”) but to “move about” (Trinh Min Ha). Critiques of “critical pedagogy” expose how Freire and others tend to shy away from the grey areas and complexities of knowledge and power in the room (Ellsworth, 1989). When we “move about,” our truth or story is not naturally written down; rather, it is woven in our minds and our hearts and spun in its telling to others. How to create an arena for story-telling that allows for this dynamic-ness? How to capture in a literacy class, where the focus is on writing and reading, the spirit of oral story-telling?

One way to “move about” is to use popular theater techniques, which can embody story-telling, music and the use of cultural metaphors. Popular theater, as opposed to conventional theater or role plays, assumes an arena where there can be a critique of structural injustices as well as an exploration of possible actions. If only the latter (say, if a group practices how to react to an abusive employer without exploring the underlying causes for the abuse), then the unspoken message is that the cause and responsibility for the problem is with the “victims.” Theater is a way for participants to “do education and make it, not having education done to them or made for them.” (Shor, 1993, p. 33) In addition, there is a greater possibility of people to be different if they are acting within new and different formats. Anything that looks like traditional education will tend to fall into the power dynamic and the narrow confines of that setting.

Stories, Problem-Posing and Popular Theater Techniques

True to Freire’s problem-posing approach, “reading the world” generates themes and words which can then be used in literacy work. In Language
Education, theater is most often used in the form of "role plays." An educator of migrant farm workers in North Carolina stated that role plays of everyday interactions are a way of creating situations in which "what the learners know but don't know that they know" can come out (Bradford, 1996). There is much unacknowledged knowledge among populations that have been functioning and maneuvering for years and for generations in the shadows of the dominant culture. In my own experience working with farm workers, when talking about sending remittances back to Mexico every week, I asked them what they do at the bank. One older learner who had never been to school before but who had the most expertise on remittances volunteered his knowledge in a mixture of English and Spanish. It is useful to begin a unit with: "What do you do?," to hold the learners’ answers in a Language Experience format or a role play, and then to create other materials out of what is developed from this question.

In their dialogue-book, Freire and Antonio Faundez discuss the...

...ploys used by the oppressed [which are necessary] in the struggle against invasion by the dominant culture. (...) These cultural expressions, which show the way in which they understand their situation and how they defend themselves, should be the starting point for these plans [of action].
(Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 43)

How can literacy techniques for farm workers be embedded in these ploys? For Augusto Boal, who developed the Theater of the Oppressed, theater is our capacity to look at ourselves, which implies that we can see alternatives, we can choose, we can invent something. He states that theater is a rich and powerful space where imagination happens and where people can see themselves. Therefore, people can try to build their future because they can see it. The theatrical space, where for Boal the distinction between actor and spectator is "democratized" and all are "spect-actors," is one where everything becomes powerful and big (Boal, 1993).

There are several good reasons for using theater in the context of literacy education. One is that it allows participants to "move about," as Trinh Minh-Ha puts it instead of having to define their story. Elizabeth Ellsworth notes the multiplicity of voices in each person's story (Ellsworth, 1989). Just as no one tells a story exactly the same way twice, theater never repeats itself. It is new and original every time. It lives in the present moment. It is an optimal creative tool in a project that unfolds in the moment and for which the end is unknown.

Many different techniques developed by Boal are applicable to teaching literacy, particularly those techniques that elicit from the participants scenes and critical issues in their lives. Integrating Augusto Boal's popular theater techniques into a Freirean approach to literacy education is not a new idea in the world. It is in fact the way in which Theater of the Oppressed was first developed
by Boal in Chile and in Northeastern Brazil. He meant it as a space where
dramatic action is set up by the participants to throw light on what is going on.
Generative or key words can be initiated through Image Theater techniques
(Boal, 1985, p. 135-139). Learners choose the words that they want to learn, and
express what those words mean to them (their “inner life”) by freezing in a
living sculpture (an image) of that word. Multiple images of a single word can
uncover the many dimensions and layers of that concept. As Augusto Boal
states, “(...) image theater is (...) stimulating because it is so easy to practice and
because of its extraordinary capacity for making thought visible.” This can be the
“code” in a Freirean sense (the visible, concrete image that is critically analyzed)
instead of “experts” creating the code. From here can be generated the themes
and key words for discussion, writing and reading.

The issues of culture and comfort levels with doing theater are important to
address, but discomfort can be reduced by building slowly, working together as a
group in a safe environment, building trust, and by focusing on real-life actions
and thoughts, things that people do and perceive every day (their “rituals and
masks” as Boal calls them) and putting them forth in a form where they can be
looked at. As Boal says, “theater is our ability to look at ourselves”. Once we can
look at something, we can name it, and after all, literacy for adults is first of all
naming one’s knowledge.

The appendix lists some of Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed exercises as well
as some suggestions on how they might be used to develop literacy activities. It is
not intended to be a prescriptive outline, but rather thoughts that might spark
ideas for more relevant activities within a community of learners.

Finding new ways to move through information that is not traditionally
valued in educational settings requires firstly the posing of thoughtful questions.
The directions that a creative educational project takes, as well as its relevance to
the farmworker community, will depend in part on its stated goals, to which we
now turn.

EDUCATIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

What to offer and how to offer that which will make adult migrant
farmworker learners choose to stay are probably the most challenging

Our specific settings and conditions teach us the limits and openings for
making change. These specific situations are the first and final arbiters of
the methods we choose, the language we speak, and the ways we organize
for change. That is exactly why I always say that the only way anyone has
of applying in their situation any of the propositions I have made is
precisely by redoing what I have done, that is, by not following me. In
order to follow me it is essential not to follow me! (Freire, quoted in Shor, 1993, p. 35)

This section will start by looking at the organizational level, and then move into a discussion of the goals of the educational process itself. The two levels must feed one another and are consequently not placed here in distinctly separate sections. All goals should start with where people come together already, as well as how they come together. Through networks of mutual assistance and support, farm workers help themselves and each other every day. They spend time together working living and moving. This is the place to start, the place from which goals emerge. Education honestly based within a community entails working with whole people, with a whole community, knowing well who they are, being learner-generated and community generated. The following are critical questions to consider in such a process.

Carolyn Moser made the distinction between practical needs and strategic interests. Practical needs, in her view, tend to be immediate and short-term, relating to the daily needs of food, housing, income and health. They are focused on particular individuals and are easily identifiable by them. Strategic interests, on the other hand, tend to be long-term, are common to most members of the community. These interests have a community focus, they relate to a disadvantaged position of subordination and lack of resources; and finally the basis for the disadvantage and potential for change are not necessarily identifiable without a systemic analysis (Moser, 1993). In a given project, what practical needs will be addressed? Which strategic goals will be given priority? While the distinction between the two, as well as what falls under each should be looked at carefully, it is a useful framework for thinking through and keeping in mind where a project is trying to go. It is important to look with a critical eye at tools for analysis of the situation of “disadvantaged” people that are developed by people who are not disadvantaged. A crucial point put forth in this paper is that people need to create their own tools, from their own perspectives.

What is the purpose of the program? Is it multi-faceted? Does it see education as a component of creating a cooperative? Setting up a problem-solving organization, and using literacy in the process? A self help group? A cultural association? Is there an institutional perspective? Linking to other community-based efforts is essential, as goals are intrinsically tied to the structure and support system that is put in place. “Teaching adult farm workers comes as close to teaching the ‘whole person’ as any teacher ever experiences [because it includes counseling, social work, legal advice, etc.]” (Kissam, 1991, Vol. 1, p. E9). You can’t walk alone. What supports exist within the community? At the work site? In the organizational structure involved in running the educational project? What support system can a literacy or adult basic education program put in place when it raises political and legal questions?
Part of a strategy for support and sustainability includes linking with other indigenous organizations and community development projects such as housing, financial assistance (alternative, community-based), child care, transportation, legal assistance and health care. It is important to keep in mind that the formal system is not set up to benefit this population. Self-help organizations have historically been strong, especially among certain ethnic and regional groups (Mixtecs, Oaxacans). There is a tradition of consciousness-raising, organizing and leadership “throughout the community’s entire nomadic journey” (quoted in Zabin, 1992, p. 51). Researchers at UCLA have taken steps to forge alliances and visualize a “bridging role” between such organizations and other farmworker advocates (Zabin, 1992, p. 60). Coalitions are key to making a difference.

Some farm workers are finding new ways to gain more power over their working lives as they learn the system in California: “The Pintero, Tomatero, and Contratista are business people who have learned to combine their knowledge about the American economic system with their skills as farm workers.” They have negotiated different arrangements with growers, ways of developing their own businesses that feed off of the formal agricultural economy (Velázquez, 1993, p. 140).

Goals are also tied intrinsically to the educational methods used. If trying to be understood is the goal, then being for the other is more important than being for oneself. Acculturation has historically been a major component of immigrant and refugee education in the U.S., and consequently of most educational opportunities offered to farm workers even though, as bi-national migrants, their educational needs and goals may be quite different. “Acculturation is the process by which individuals move from one socio-cultural setting to another and acquire the norms of another culture. This process can be dysfunctional for Hispanics if the discontinuity between their culture and the mainstream society are not effectively bridged through functional education.” (quoted in Velázquez, p. 149). The questions remain: who determines whether acculturation is the goal? Acculturation to what? To hard labor? To a consumerist society?

In an innovative educational process, it is important to find ways to de-compartmentalize “skills” and to build in what is often called “learning to learn.” However, this term is loaded. Saying that people need to “learn how to learn” masks the real problem, which has to do with power and access. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, if farm workers did not know how to learn, they would probably not be alive. To look at the workers occupying the lowest position in an oppressive structure and say that they are there because they do not know how to learn is to ignore the structure. Participatory and learner-centered techniques can get at a critique of the structure as well as valuing the knowledge and learning that farm workers already have. What are ways to think about skills that make us most adaptable? What is meant by “learning to learn”? The question is rather how people do learn and does this mobile population
are therefore constructed in a very different way (perhaps as having more choices but fewer skills). However, such definitions of who people are and what they “need” are much too simplistic and rarely include what they bring with them. There is a great danger of constructing “others” in uni-dimensional ways and then of building whole structures upon such foundations. What happens to the people who get “processed through” such structures? What happens to the meaning that they themselves make of their experience?

Most written work on farmworker education consists of practical ideas for integrating these populations more steadily into existing adult education programs, taking seriously the realities of migrant and seasonal farm workers’ lives (see Kissam, 1991). What is lacking is an alternative vision. Most English as a Second Language programs focus on “survival skills.” The post-Vietnam-era wave of refugees and immigrants triggered the development of the “survival trend,” and the idea that “language-learning for adults should be experience-centered and reality-based,” focusing on the “language needs of the real world” (Auerbach, 1985). The problem is: Who determines the parameters and linguistic content of the “real world”? In her important critique of the “survival trend,” Auerbach quotes Freire on the difference between adaptation and integration: “Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and transform that reality.” Without these choices, people are adapted (quoted in Auerbach, 1985). Language programs often focus on breaking language-learning down into tasks that can be mastered and easily measured, regardless of their relationship to reality or to sociopolitical structures. This has been termed problem-solving, as opposed to problem-posing (whereby learners devise their own alternatives through dialog). The crucial question is not whether survival skills are needed, but rather how they are learned and to what ends.

What might an alternative to the “survival skills stance” look like? The context discussed here is one in which learners have mastered (to varying degrees) maneuvering in a highly complex “underground world.” Calling literacy and other basic education skills “survival skills” or “lifeskills,” as they are often called in ESL is an interesting political move. As long as we can think of refugees and immigrants in this country just learning to “survive,” i.e., barely surviving, then they are not a threat to us in terms of political and economic power, in terms of who “constructs reality” as it is perceived by the hegemony. The assumption is also that they do not deserve hopes and dreams beyond survival.

These questions leads back to the discussion of knowledge and who defines what is considered knowledge. The identity of “Other” that the dominant culture has constructed for the nameless brown workers here is solidified by the labels that are given to the skills that “they” are supposed to gain. The assumption that they don’t yet know how to survive is particularly daunting given the fact in order to operate in more than one culture, with limited access to the formal
learning of language and literacy skills in this society, to live and work and move, they must possess tremendous resourcefulness, flexibility, analytical skills, courage, strength, dignity, and a clear sense of who they are and where they are going. If most of the people being taught “survival skills” in the US, did not already have such skills, and beyond such skills, they would not be alive. This is certainly true for Southeast Asian refugees, it is also true for the agricultural labor force, which carries the burden of the seasonal nature of this work. The Mexican women in Los Angeles quoted earlier were well aware of the contradictions between the promises of education, the real conditions of their lives and their own expectations in this country:

[They] asserted that learning to read and write English was crucial to getting ahead, and they said that it was unnecessary, for one could get by alright without it, and one could never learn enough for it to make a real difference in their lives (Rockhill, 1993, p. 163).

The ethnographic study “Mexican and Mexican American Farm Workers” from 1985 finds comparable contradictions:

[The level of education does not] make any significant difference in their rate of pay, working conditions, or opportunities for upward social mobility.” [Also], a study by the California Legislative Committee on Agriculture found that ‘educational achievement among agricultural workers does not have any significant impact on their earning potential or annual income.’ Neither educational attainment nor literacy in English has any important bearing on medial earnings. This can be explained by the fact that most Mexican workers are field workers performing jobs where skills applied in school are not important. [And yet], as a general rule, our respondents exhibited a most favorable attitude toward education and viewed it as a means of improving their present social and economic condition, (...) most viewed education as a means of securing a better job outside the agricultural industry. (...) (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 129-131) Workers viewed education as an important factor in ‘success’ (Gonzalez, 1985, p.181).

He goes on to state that factors affecting the level and duration of gainful employment were more likely to be skill level (from experience), tenure and migrancy status, marital status (affecting level of dedication), legal status and specialization (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 99-107)

As mentioned above, in attempting to address such powerful contradictions, educators need to question the messages that are offered to new (and not-so-new) arrivals in the US. The assumptions that are made about learners’ goals must also be questioned. With Proposition 187 and the climate that surrounds it, there is a scramble across California for Citizenship classes. Not only does this add to the constraints in attempting to address other issues, it fails
to question the goal of US citizenship for a bi-national population. If working for part of the year in the US contributes to a family’s economic survival in Mexico and if, in the meantime, the US is being fed out of that work, what questions must we ask in order to promote and facilitate an honest dialogue about What Is Going On, about what education is for, and about worker-learner goals?

"Whereas animals adapt themselves to the world in order to survive, men modify the world in order to be more" (Freire, 1985, p. 70, italics in original). The consciousness that makes humans different from animals is our ability to act in the world and at the same time to objectify our actions, look at them, critically reflect, to imagine alternatives. "Survival skills," on the other hand, are not about alternatives.

I was determined to provide a safe place where the learners were treated with respect and dignity, to counteract in every way possible the manner in which they are treated by the dominant culture. As an educator, particularly in a situation like this one, it is important to never forget the context. The world around us does not look like THIS. The role of the facilitator is to create a safe place, to find the point of entry and stretch the boundaries of it, to create a room. But you don’t kid yourself. What happens in the room is NOT reflected outside. You talk about how to deal with outside and try to nurture something they can take outside, but you don’t go out there with them. Are we nurturing a false sense of hope, something that the world won’t back up...and then walking away? (author’s field notes)

PHYSICAL LOCATION AND OTHER LOGISTICS

"We need to understand the possibilities and limitations to change" (Macedo, 1995)

The question of maximizing opportunities in worker education must take into account the physical location of the educational project as well as other logistical considerations. The term “logistics” does not give adequate weight to these factors for in fact, for this particular population, the issues of time and place are paramount. What is the setting for the literacy program? Is it situated at the workplace? at a labor camp? in town? To whom is it accessible? At the work site in Sonoma, four women worked washing lettuce, but because the classes were offered at the work place at night and they lived in town, the classes were not accessible to them. As this example shows, it is important to understand how the physical location of the classes will affect accessibility. Another crucial question concerning the site is: What is allowed there? Does the learning community have power at the site? What can be addressed overtly and what must be more subversive? It is to these questions that we now turn.
An educational project grounded in the heart of where the learning community lives needs to be so physically as well, to locate itself where the people come together. The physical site of the literacy class can determine how participatory the planning and implementation of methods can be. In my own experience in farmworker education:

I was distinctly aware of the political nature of the work that I did and quickly found myself walking a fine line. Many issues that the learners and I discussed in class could have been the stepping stones to explicit critical education, the discussion of a highly oppressive structure, where they fit into it and why. It would not have been possible to openly practice a Freirean approach in this setting, not for more than a day. (author's field notes)

The 'critical education' component could only be faintly alluded to. It would have been a small step to get to critical education. It would have meant letting it rip. Politically it was a big step for we could not even have a dialogue about whether critical problem-posing might be a goal. The empowerment component, the most important component as far as I was concerned in terms of what I felt I could actually do, was subversive. It was not in the content (what was learned) but in the process (the way it was learned). To me, empowerment education meant respecting and valuing the learners (and I hesitate to call them the learners because I, too, was learning a tremendous amount) and their experiences as much as I could in my interactions with them and in the educational process. It was impossible to see our classroom-barn as separate from the wider society and the way that this society views these particular workers (not "learners"... the society does not view them as learners). In many ways my task was an easy one: to do the opposite of what the dominant culture does. It was not difficult. It was my natural inclination. The real challenge was not to get booted off the ranch. (author's field notes)

Because of the constraints of time and mobility for farm workers, the location of an educational program must take into account the housing situation of the workers. Are they housed at the worksite? Or in a labor camp? At other housing off the worksite? There are 26 state-operated labor camps in California, accommodating less than 10% of the demand for temporary housing for farm workers (Kissam, 1991, Vol. 1, p. D13). Although housing plays a key role in farm workers' choices about movement, areas of labor surplus (such as California) are less likely to provide housing. The trends in housing development are worth following, as there is a current thrust in this direction within local, community-based economic development projects (a recently completed project is the Healdsburg housing project in Sonoma County). Not without their political challenges, these projects should be studied to determine important factors contributing to the building of community. Where housing is made available,
who has access to it? What is the relationship between the network(s) to which one is linked and the accessibility of important resources? Often, farm workers live in barracks, trailers, tents, cars, or they rent a small space on a floor at night. Where public housing for agricultural workers is made available, it can be the locus of multiservice programs addressing social, economic, legal and educational needs, goals and strengths of farmworker communities.

Employer-provided housing facilities, education and child care should ideally be seen as key factors in recruiting and maintaining a productive work force, but are almost universally seen as luxuries. Unaccompanied males, in particular, are seen as “easier to house,” more compliant and less likely to leave a particularly exploitative situation (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 264-5). As long as there is a surplus of agricultural labor, and increasing numbers of new arrivals without the same strong network links, as well as greater control by farm labor contractors and other employers over all facets of the migratory labor process (transportation, housing, supply of amenities (i.e., the company-store syndrome), “poverty, injury and inhumanity [will continue to be] common features of putting food on America’s table” (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 270)

Often the only plausible site for a migrant education program is at the work place itself, which may or may not also be the housing site, and which may or may not be on land owned by the employer. From the point of view of the learning group, there are certain opportunities associated with being at the work site. These include the existence of a ready-formed group, and with the ease of working with the context and the things that surround the workers for many hours every day. There is also the possibility of using other resources available there (xerox machine, paper, furniture, etc.) This, on the other hand, requires the support of the employer, which brings up the question of selling the program to growers. This has always been an issue for Workplace Education programs. The director of the Rural Workplace Literacy Program in Sonoma County, stated the following:

You have to show them [the employers] you mean business and you’re there for results, and they have to be committed to the results too, and that usually means out of their pocket. (Penny, Gallagher 1995)

The pamphlets sent out by this program to growers stressed that: “Now, more than ever, your workers need to understand verbal and/or written instructions, increase response time and prioritize tasks for greater efficiency” and “Upgrading your workers’ literacy skills will make them more capable to meet your production demands.” The selling point is that more literate and confident workers able to solve problems would be beneficial from a business point of view.

At the site of a different program, the vineyard foreman at Mondavi Wineries in Napa Valley, where a workplace literacy program is in place on a
seasonal basis, wanted workers to learn "how to better communicate in general "because we need information from them." He stressed the importance of keeping the information flowing "from the bottom to the top." Now in its fifth year, 25% of the work force is attending, and the employers' goal is 50%. The workers are not paid for classroom time, but their schedules are adjusted to allow for attendance and they receive a bonus after completing 80% of the classes. When asked why they did not receive release time, he responded that management wants to know that the motivation for attending is to "improve communication skills," not for financial gain. He added that the bonus was "the company's way of showing people that they know it is difficult." (personal communication, August 1995)

The official Workplace Literacy literature is littered with this selling point. Clearly, financial support, in the form of grants and employer support to workers, is tied to a very practical orientation. Penny Gallagher also noted that the Workplace Literacy classes that were most successful in terms of sustained attendance tended to be at worksites with 1) shorter working days and better conditions and 2) a real commitment from the employer, one beyond the belief that it was a "good idea." This implies that programs are more likely to succeed where conditions are already better, and that those workers with less access to supportive networks and better jobs are less likely to participate in an educational project. How to develop a project that is not a luxury, that is close enough to the heart-throb of what needs to be done that it is accessible in a very real sense?

It is important to remember that if workers also live on the worksite, this may be the only viable alternative, there may not be another place where they congregate or that they could realistically get to.

As soon as I first set foot on the place, I was distinctly aware of the political nature of the work I did and of the fine line that I walked. I was clear in my own mind that my interests lay with the workers and with empowerment education for and with them. It was also clear that to gain access to the workers and to safeguard that space, I needed to appease the owner of the ranch. I was doing empowerment education under the guise of English classes.

(author's field notes)

I explained the use that the photos [of workers in the fields] had as teaching tools and promised that they would be used only for this purpose. He [the boss] agreed to this, and I began to walk the thin line. However one approaches this kind of work, it is highly political. I was determined to follow an empowerment model in my teaching. I was equally determined not to get kicked off the ranch, especially not before I even got started. The empowerment had to be subversive.

(author's field notes)
Other potential locations for programs should be explored as well, places where people congregate and where they can have some measure of control. One educator has taught farmworker parents and their children in city parks because “you don’t have to depend on any physical bureaucracy” (Raul Añorve, 1995). In a similar vein, BOCES-Geneseo in New York is rare example of a formal program successfully accomplishing the idea of “anytime, anyplace, any pace” (Kissam, 1991, vol. 1, p. D3). Other (usually tutoring) programs have been run out of libraries, though the support for these can too often depend upon one person. To cite another example, in the Napa Valley North of San Francisco, there is a bus equipped with computers and teachers from the local adult education facility that makes the rounds of several wineries. The obvious benefit of serving a wide migrant population with a program that is itself mobile is clear. But, can such a program be viewed by learners as “theirs” if it is not anchored where they are? In what ways can an educational program for a migrant population be anchored?

Crucial to the kinds of educational goals promoted in this paper are context-specific explorations of spaces where education can develop outside of the formal (even the formal non-formal) outlines of educational possibilities. Though it is crucial that we educate funders as well, in the hopes of bringing their objectives closer to the lived experience of educational projects, the further removed a group of people can get from these formal structures, the more power they themselves can have over the experience, its aims and objectives as well as the process. In the political climate outlined above, one that threatens to grow worse before it gets better, Mexican-American workers in California carry many contradictory burdens, including those of nurturing their own sense of power and of educating the dominant culture. Can both be done at once? Does the first require “going underground”?

The political considerations are embedded in the very notion of education for a population that forms a permanent underclass, providing a constant supply of cheap labor to the fields of California. “Survival skills” and other curricula that avoid political issues actually take a firm political stance by doing so. Teaching workers to swim carefully and compliantly through the tides of work dynamics adds to the power of an oppressive structure. An educational project that, on the other hand, seeks to address this structure in a critical way must itself maneuver carefully, taking into consideration where it is physically located, the specific power dynamics of that place, “what is allowed there” and the forms that “stealth education” can take there.

Power at the worksite:

_from my point of view, it was important to continue to walk the fine line, to keep the empowerment subversive, even after John [the boss] relaxed about the classes, because I felt that it was crucial to safe-guard the_
possibility of re-entry. At this time, given their work schedules and their extreme marginalization from the larger community, there aren't any other clear educational options, especially for the older workers. When the funding ran out and the class ended in September of 1993 there were vague plans and tremendous hope among the workers for another class at the ranch sometime in the future, when the Project got refunded. I thought that it was very important not to alienate or threaten John and thereby jeopardize this possibility. I did not believe that it was my place to do so. The price we paid for this "safety" was to not overtly raise crucial issues of power and oppression. This was a high price.

( author's field notes )

Questions about location should include thoughtful consideration of what a particular place is tied to. The internal differentiation mentioned elsewhere points to wide discrepancies among farm workers in terms of access to resources. "Community-based" should not mean based in communities with already greater resources. This is a serious dilemma, as these are the communities with the greatest potential for successful programs (by traditional measurements). They are more likely to have amicable worker-management relationships, relatively decent wages, employer-provided housing, visibility in terms of the wider settled community (in "liberal" areas especially, providing educational opportunities to workers can be a positive public relations point for growers). Increasingly, such work sites are in the minority.

Aside from physical location, other logistical considerations include timing (seasonal timing, crop timing, and daily timing), family needs (child care), and transportation. Work schedules fluctuate so widely that any fixed program is likely to miss the mark. This is a major challenge to educational program developers with a conventional outlook, one that expects learners to adjust to school schedules. A project that starts at the center of where and how farm workers live must by definition be migrant itself, adaptable to the times and places where peoples’ lives provide spaces of opportunity. This implies not only opportunities for education but opportunities to feel successful in an educational endeavor. This is crucial. In "homebase states" such as California, Texas and Florida, where farm workers “rest” during winter and early Spring, this may be the best opportunity to provide consistent services.

The agricultural season must be considered and classes scheduled around it, in terms of time of year and in terms of time of day. In the case of this particular ranch, the entire course could be conducted after the workers return from the winter in Mexico (in February-March) and before the work load reaches its peak (in late June). This is crucial first because it would allow for more workers to experience the feeling of success that comes with having access to much of what was offered, particularly in a setting such as this, where other educational opportunities are not readily available. It is also important if numbers are what count in how such
projects are officially evaluated, which in turn directly affects funding opportunities. In this case, success depended upon the number of learners who completed 75 hours of class.

This way of evaluating it carries into the classroom also, and most who started did not complete 75 hours. Which brings me to the point that we must nurture the sense that ANY amount of learning is valuable. Don't quantify it. The counting of formal years of schooling that is done to assess and evaluate people is humiliating. This way of measuring education should not be carried over into this non-formal, supposedly empowering setting.

(author’s field notes)

Choices about educational goals and methods must take into consideration the necessarily open attendance policy of farmworker education classes. The facilitator can not assume that she can build on methods and generated materials over time. Even attendance at one or a few classes can be worthwhile for learners if the facilitator is creative and grounds her practice in the realities of the learners. “Success” in this context should not depend upon completing a great number of hours in the classroom setting. Success should be measured by learners’ own goals, defined with a clear understanding of the time and energy as well as the personal strengths and support networks (networks of mutual teaching) that learners have. It is also important to remember that goals keep changing.

The issue of long interruptions between educational sessions needs to be seen as an intrinsic component of any educational project for migrant workers, instead of a “problem.” We need to rethink what education looks like. Do we “grab it where we can,” instead of expecting a continuous flow? Even for students who can go to school every day, learning naturally happens in spurts and moments. Education for adults can not realistically happen every day in any setting.

In her research, Hayes found that trust and familiarity with the providing agency were either the greatest barriers or the greatest facilitators to participation. She found that adults did not attend educational programs for the following reasons:

1) They did not fit in the classes (they said they were too old).
2) They did not want to attend classes in certain buildings or locations.
3) They thought that starting classes would entail too much paperwork.
4) They didn’t know anybody there.
5) They had scheduling problems (not enough time to attend).

(Hayes, 1989)

The implications for tying educational projects to the organic processes of the
community are clear. Who are the people most likely to successfully develop such projects?

WHO ARE THE FACILITATORS AND WHO TRAINS THEM?

One of the main goals of this work is to uncover the power issues imbedded in the major aspects of developing an educational project. Another key aspect, along with goals, physical location and content (defining what knowledge is) is: who fills the teacher/facilitator role? If we want to diverge from the agenda of education for farm workers, it is important to pose questions that will allow us to envision alternatives to the traditional notions that education goes from people who know things to people who do not.

I went to tell the farm workers what I want to do, to put their experience into this paper. Sitting in their kitchen, under a bare light bulb, listening to them. I tried to get them to think about the Literacy/ESL Program that we had had there 2 years before and to suggest ways that it could have been better. I wanted to get their ideas about how the ideal education program would look to them. They said it was great, they asked if we would have another. This may have been because of who I was, the teacher, a gringa. What, I wonder, might have come up here and in classes if I were a community facilitator instead of the gringa English teacher? Another reason they probably did not critique the program is that since then there has been nothing. They would like to have anything. What they did want to talk about was:

• Pete Wilson and Proposition 187. The fact that they want all of the Mexicans to get out and how difficult it is becoming to get across the border
• They pay taxes. They contribute $90 billion in taxes and only receive $5 billion back in the form of services. They are here to work, not to be on welfare.
• They have never seen a gringo in the fields. If they kick all of the Mexicans out, who will grow the fruits and vegetables? (author's field notes)

How is "what comes up" related to "who teaches"? Can someone with a background and life experiences vastly different from the group effectively take on a dialogical role that will help to propel the group in new and creative directions? How and how much does one need to know about life as a migrant farm worker in order to understand and to assist in negotiating the complexities of that life. "The series of interactions that immigrant women in particular have with bureaucracies is much more complex than 'filling in the blanks' on an information sheet (...) Language means more than words" (Rockhill, 1993, p.
And once it is determined what is beyond words (the "cultural capital" that Bourdieu writes about), that still does not answer the question of what is to be done with it. How do we want to be vis-à-vis the culture, vis-à-vis the information? Freire wrote of his literacy projects in Brazil: "A major problem in setting up the program is instructing the teams of coordinators" (quoted in Shor, 1993, p. 29). He further argued that it was preferable not to use trained teachers because it was too difficult to untrain them. Similarly, Jane Vella points out that "the urge to teach can get in the way of learning" (Vella, 1994, p. 8). The book Women's Ways of Knowing tries to get at some of these things that seem to slip between our fingers and yet that represent where many people live (Belenky et al., 1986, chapter 9). Literacy is really "many literacies" and to facilitate the process means first of all to be a listener but, I would add, it also means to be an observer and a feeler. It means to be at times very still, almost invisible, and yet to care and make sure that something happens. "The responsibility to learn is theirs. Ours is to listen, to urge, to support an celebrate" (Vella, 1994, p. 12).

Because teachers are conditioned by life-long participation in traditional educational settings the use of educational techniques that assume a different structure of and relationship to power can not be expected. At most, it can be expected of certain individuals. The labels "teacher" and "learner" not only assume and impose a clear power relationship, they belie the nature of any true and respectful exchange between people. Teachers are also learners, just as learners are also teachers. Facilitating a dialogue, in which everybody is learning, requires walking a new path. In Ira Shor's words, "this delicate balance between teacher and students is a 'near mystery' of democratic practice" (Shor, 1993, p. 30). The path through this mysterious terrain is made by walking it, but how to start the journey? The role of the teachers or facilitators is to become "problem posers and dialogue leaders":

"Dialogic: The basic format of the class is dialogue around problems posed by teacher and students. The teacher initiates this process and guides it into deeper phases. By frontloading questions and backloading lectures, the teacher invites students to assert their ownership of their education, building the dialogue with their words. They are doing education and making it, not having education done to them or made for them." (Shor, 1993, p. 33)

Who can best get to what needs to be tapped, while keeping in mind the fundamental ingredients of "respect, immediacy, relevance and accountability" when teaching adults (Vella, 1994, p. 8)? Beat the Streets, a highly successful homeless literacy project in Canada, requires that its instructors have the experience of homelessness in their lives. It serves as a good model for community-based education. What are the opportunities and constraints, the possibilities and challenges of training "literacy facilitators" that are or have been migrant farm workers? What are the implications when training or education pulls individuals or classes of individuals away from their community? This is
most likely to occur when the education is defined as external, as something which separates those who have it from those who do not. It is not in or from the community. Therefore, the training of facilitators can pull them away when the training or "upward mobility" cuts people off from access to funds of knowledge that they previously had. What are the alternatives? Perhaps more importantly, how to include a dialog about these questions in a training program? A meaningful training should model the kind of educational experience that is sought. It is not enough to talk about important principles, about uncovering hidden knowledge, about shifting the locus of power, languages and power and creation of identities -- the training must model a process of grappling with these things. Of stumbling through it, while trying to move toward a different kind of education.

In her innovative Boston-based project, Elsa Auerbach provided training for community members who then facilitated ESL and native language literacy classes at community-based programs where they had previously been students. Her manuscript entitled "From the Community to the Community" provides a detailed description and analysis of this experience. Providing "mirror training," in which the participants are trained following the participatory methods that they are then to use in the classroom, is one important way to narrow the space that can exist between training and its application. This blueprint also provides the much-needed support that facilitators often lack (We burn out because we burn alone). Still, the training, provided by Auerbach, does not question in a basic sense "going through a third party," or the positioning of individuals from the dominant culture as trainers. Auerbach's work, though creative and important, is still comparable to bringing community members into the conventional structure of adult education. While such practices are key, and revolutionary within adult education as it currently exists in this country, they do little to change an oppressive structure.

It is also important to question the basic assumptions that are made among educators who over-use the word "empowerment." The belief that participatory, learner-centered or experiential methods are by definition "better" fails to problematize the choice of methods. The belief that telling your story is empowering is the latest trend and a reaction to traditional methods, but it is not everything. As Donaldo Macedo has stated: "If you can 'empower' someone, then you can take it away too" (Macedo, 1995). The following section, on power, includes additional discussion on methodologies.

It is crucial to question the widespread scenario whereby any "valid knowledge" is filtered through a system within the dominant culture or, at the very least, an individual (teacher, information provider or resource person) from that culture. Traditionally, educational programs that might be accessible to farm workers fall into the realm of the ESL field, which springs from and is heavily dominated by middle-class, white US culture. Instead, educational programs grounded in farmworker culture and experience should have as their
facilitators people from the farmworker community. They should develop from the networks that already exist within these communities. At the same time, choices must be made, between bringing trained facilitators from the community into existing programs and starting within the community while forging alliances. These choices will reflect the goals of the project. How much can existing structures change? On whose terms is the project developed?

The point of entry for an outsider can be an effective one as well, because what one is perceived to be doing and what one is really doing can be two very different things:

The first thing the facilitator must do is to earn the trust of the learners. In this setting, it was such a unique and unheard of phenomenon to have classes at all that I was particularly sensitive about trust. As it turned out, I think that being an "English teacher" was my point of entry. I was "la maestra," a role that the workers could comprehend in this world where they had so few positive interactions with white people. They were certainly curious and perhaps wary at first. Being in class may have been embarrassing, something that adults don't do. It was important to create an atmosphere that was welcoming to learners at any level of English and literacy, respectful and completely un-intimidating. The educational methodology is key to fostering this kind of atmosphere. I was an outsider, but a teacher is a known "position," someone who is respected and listened to. I felt honored to work with them and showed them the same respect, and they were eager to learn. As I see it, being a teacher gave me access, from the point of view of the learners as well as the management. Once I was in, I could actually take on the role that I felt comfortable with, which was more that of a facilitator. The label can help to create the space of opportunity. (author's field notes)

How can we think more creatively about roles that we can take on if we are outsiders and advocates. Can we help to negotiate spaces of opportunity (for ex., with employers) but not be "the teachers"? Again, the critical issue here is one of power, which will be discussed below.

POWER

There is something to lose in any change in what we take to be knowledge, just as there is something to gain: power is at stake here, including the most basic power of all, the power to define what and who is real, what and who is valuable, what and who matters (Minnich, 1990, p. 172-3).

This section will focus on power, both in building a program and in the
classroom. Who has it? How is it exercised? The power dynamics are many and complex depending upon who the different actors or stakeholders involved in the project are (funders, educational organizations, community organizations, unions, workplace management, official and “unofficial” community leaders, etc.) Among the workers/students alone, the power dynamics are often highly complex:

All of the farmworkers on this vegetable ranch were from Mexico, mostly from Guanajuato and from Michoacán. Most are men who have left their families behind in Mexico to conduct seasonal farm work every year in California. They return to Mexico between November and March. Many have been returning to work at this particular ranch every year for up to 10 years. More years spent migrating gives them higher status, though after a certain age, I think that they start to lose it in some ways. Some have families in California and live with them in town, a few miles from the ranch. This gives them higher status than the fifteen to twenty men who lived at the ranch, in group rooms behind the barn where we had the classes. Another important variable determining status and position of the workers vis-à-vis each other was their job at the ranch. Starting at the “bottom,” there were the field-workers, then the lettuce washers (who made the “salad mix”), then the packers, and finally the drivers, those who drove the trucks which brought the produce in from the fields and those who drove the tractors. Work time on the ranch was 6-7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day, up to 14 hours in the summer. They were not unionized and it is not required by US law that farmworkers be paid overtime. There were 4 women workers at the ranch, all washing lettuce. Though I encouraged them to come to class, in reality it was not accessible to them because they had children to care for in the evenings and because they lived in town and could not easily return to the ranch after work. The ages of the workers varied between 17 and 47 years. Their literacy levels varied from pre-literate to 10 years of schooling in Mexico. Their English language abilities varied between true beginners to quite conversant. All of these factors affect status in complex ways. This was a Multi-Level Class in the truest sense of the word. But this label referring to language and literacy abilities is not inclusive enough. They also had different reasons for wanting to learn, different dreams. The following gives a sense of the diversity:

Miguel is from Guanajuato, Mexico. At 47 years, he is the oldest learner and has been working at this ranch for the longest (10 years). He is a field worker. He has a wife and 5 children in Mexico, where he returns every winter for a few months. He also supports two teenaged sons who live with a family in a town 20 miles from the ranch. He can not drive and it is difficult for him to visit them. He has strong hopes that through education and a certain amount of integration his sons will have lives very different from his, though he is worried about drugs and other
youth problems in the US. Miguel's spoken English and literacy skills are at a very beginning level. He has never been to school before. In 4 1/2 months he never missed a class.

Antonio is a single 24 year-old man who has been working at the ranch for 5 years. He drives and fixes the tractors, which gives him a fairly high status in the workplace. He is trusted and counted upon by the ranch owner in a way that sets him apart from the other workers. He has a California Driver's License and a car. He is fairly comfortable in both written and spoken English as well as Spanish. He had 8 years of schooling as a child in Mexico. He has hopes of studying further in English and of moving up. In 4 1/2 months he never misses a class (author's field notes).

The hierarchy of labor is further addressed in these lines from the field notes:

Though John [the owner] was not there in the evenings, there was one worker in class who had higher status than the others. This worker, [Antonio], drove the tractor, received higher pay than the others, and was close to John. He lived at the ranch with the others, but there was a visible distance between him and the other worker/learners. Though I couldn't be sure, I suspected that anything that happened in class that John wouldn't like would get back to him through Antonio. This was another reason to be careful (author's field notes).

As mentioned above, a complex variety of factors contribute further to the hierarchy between farm workers: legal status, length of time as a migrant, reasons for migrating, positioning within a network, ethnicity, gender, etc.

The issue of gender has not been adequately addressed in this work. What are the ways in which migration strategies impact differently on women than on men? Research has shown the important role women immigrants play in "anchoring networks to regions and stabilizing migrations" (Griffith and Kissam, 1995, p. 212). It is usually the settling of a woman in the family that anchors it to a particular US-based sending region. There exists some recent ethnographic research addressing the particular needs, strengths and constraints of farmworker women in attempting to access services and gain more control over their lives. Where women are involved in educational projects, it is often they who cement the group and propel it along. Because my own farmworker education experiences involved a male population, and because work sites that consist predominantly of unaccompanied male workers are often particularly controlled by management or farm labor contractors, constructing workers' identities in the very narrowest of terms, this is the context most strongly addressed here. This is in no way to diminish the strengths and needs of the women and children who also grow the food in this country.
The power issues of adult education and of farm workers’ lives are strewn throughout this paper, including the dynamics involved in the political and social construction of the identity of “farm worker,” the power dynamics of conventional ESL and adult education and immigrant identity. Some of the intrinsic labor-management power issues of the worksite were also addressed. Other important issues and choices must be dealt with within a learning community’s dialog.

Language considerations are also power considerations. Languages among this population include dialects of Spanish, English and local languages. Bilingualism in both English and Spanish is the reality in the Latino community in the US. If the complexities of real life are part of the educational dialogue, can only one language be used? Which languages does a particular group of workers/learners understand, speak, read or write? Power issues loom large between languages. What are the power dynamics between learners with different mother tongues and dialects and different levels of mastering Spanish and English? What do learners need and want to know in different languages? Which languages offer the greatest access in terms of the networks of information and support? Which language(s) are most useful for different needs or goals? How to safeguard and honor local knowledge and local language while at the same time increase access to the funds of knowledge that come with knowing the dominant language(s) or dialect(s) of Spanish and English. This is intrinsically tied to questions of knowledge and power. What kind of knowledge is more powerful, more desirable? Do people want access to what a “language of power” can give them? What does a particular language provide access to? (and what other simultaneous factors does this depend upon) and what do people think it provides access to and are they the same thing?) It is important to find ways of honoring what learners want to be able to do without discrediting the language which is closest to their hearts. In “Community Literature in the Multicultural Classroom: The Mothers’ Reading Program” the authors make the claim that learning the language and the text of the dominant culture is necessarily alienating and dis-empowering, that people need to learn their own first (Walsh, 1991, p. 138). Is this always true? Who decides where the power is? Who is in the position to “allow” certain things to take place, allow other kinds of knowledge and expression to be valued?

Another important issue to consider is the structure of Spanish and of local languages, and their phonetic-ness as compared to English, as well as how communication occurs in these languages. What is the structure of the stories? What are the varieties of ways of having dialogue? What are important metaphors from the cultures of the learners? What do silences mean? Literacy facilitators should know these things but often do not. We need to bring these issues into the classroom using alternative forms of dialogue.

As Delgado-Gaitán, Ogbu, Shor and many others have asserted, it is fundamentally important to contest the “deprivation theory.” This entails
moving beyond “culture of home” vs. “culture of school” dynamic to fault the
economic, political and social status of the broad Mexican population for a
shameful lack of access to resources and humane living and working conditions.
Delgado-Gaitán looks at “the complex relationship between the practice of
literacy in the daily life of people and their socioeconomic environment” (...) "Ogbu reminds us that, in a racially and economically stratified society like the
US, social, occupational and political roles, as well as cognitive, motivational and
social skills associated with those roles, tend to be stratified" (Delgado-Gaitán,
1987, p. 11). Ogbu has referred to people’s knowledge of their resources as their
knowledge of their “effective environment”, “one in which they know the
available resources.” Illiteracy is therefore a consequence of the socio-economic
structure.

The question of what educational methodologies to promote is critical as
well. Empowerment? For what? In Empowerment as a Pedagogy of Possibility,
Roger Simon discusses what it would look like to have a “pedagogy of
empowerment” that would support a “project of possibility,” promoting a vision
and imagination of how life could be, not fitting into the narrow confines of
“what is” (Simon).

What is important is not just to be learner-centered, it is also how one
goes about it. A literacy facilitator can promote the empowerment of the
learners without saying explicitly: “Look! I am valuing your local
knowledge!” I am not sure it is as necessary to talk about it as it is to
simply (rather, not so simply) do it. Currently, in education, we talk about
empowerment, about multiculturalism, about the other buzz-words,
when we do not know how to live them. The talk, the conferences, the
publications put the educators in the limelight for the words that they
use. It is not unlikely that a facilitator from the community would be
more apt to “walk the walk.” (author’s field notes)

Along similar lines, Cunningham asks the following important questions:

What is work? What is life? and how does adult education contribute to
each? If the structures of our society should promote equality how do
adult educators face up to racism, gender inequity, social class bias and
imperialism? [...] Is adult education about the politics of privilege? Is adult
education a way of keeping power relationships as they are or is adult
education aligned with the political and social movements that challenge
the assumptions of the present ‘way of doing business’ (Cunningham,
1993)

The belief that learners telling their stories is empowering is the latest trend
in literacy and a reaction to traditional methods, but, as Donaldo Macedo states: If
you can “empower” someone, then you can take it away too (Macedo, 1995). It
may be ludicrous to think that anyone can empower another person. If one is
empowered by having more control over one’s life, then what makes us think that we can give that to someone else? (Clarke, 1990) In his documentation of a bilingual, bi-cultural community literacy program for farm workers, Tomás Mario Kalmar attests that people teach themselves (Kalmar, 1983). Who decides what empowerment is and where it comes from? Does basing the educational experience in the reality of the learners' lives mean that they must divulge their stories whether they like it or not? Perhaps the question should be: What do we mean by “based in the lives of the learners?” Does it mean that the material of the class must be the stuff of learners daily life? Or does it mean that learners decide what they want to learn and how? Which approach gives the learners more power over the educational situation?

It behooves literacy educators to develop a philosophical stance about learning, knowledge and power and how this relates to choice of methods. How to honor prior knowledge in its different forms? If priority in program goals is to value culture and systems of communication that are not usually valued in education, how does this affect the choice of methods and the choice of facilitators? Bringing out and using the meaning that learners have in their heads when they come to text, and going with what the learner needs or wants at the moment (phonics? part-to-whole?): can both be done at once? In other words, at what level are we valuing learners’ knowledge? If both can be done at once, how? If the crucial question is “Who is making the decisions about choice of methods?” then how to bring learners into a dialogue about this, given time and energy constraints?

In ESL for Action: Problem-Posing at Work, Auerbach and Wallerstein use a process which includes “naming a problem, discussing it, finding out more about it, working with others to understand it and to think of ways to change it, thinking about the results of the actions and taking action to make small changes” (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987, p. 59). “Problem-posing is based on the premise that education starts with issues in people’s lives and, through dialogue, encourages students to develop a critical view of their lives and the ways to act to enhance their self-esteem, and improve their lives” (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 3, italics in original). Problem posing techniques take the critical step of moving beyond the notion and the language that targets individuals “pathologies.” Instead, they base education within a dialogue about structural inequities. The importance of this kind of dialogue becomes all the greater with the current political climate which blames the ills of society on illegal “aliens” and even on legal immigrants (which the hazy but deadly term “suspected illegal aliens” encompasses).

The question remains that, although this method clearly moves beyond “survival skills,” Who decides what kinds of materials or methodology is used? The situation of being a “revolutionary with a ticket out” begs the question of who pays the consequences. How to incorporate a discussion of this into it, because the laws are not enforced? There are some examples of these techniques
being used at the workplace (with the International Lady Garment Workers Union in New York, for example). Again, as mentioned before, the politics of such a dialogue at the work site can not be ignored. There are choices to make, therefore about how to do it and under what guise. Is there a choice of doing it subversively, as a kind of “stealth education”? What if using this means you get booted out? Who weighs these factors and makes these choices? Can a dialogue be created about what to discuss in class and how?

What does it mean to use a participatory methodology if the learners are not part of the decision to use it? What does it mean to be learner-centered when someone besides the learners have chosen this approach? What does it mean to grant learners a voice in making these choices? How often is there an unmasked dialogue about whether and how learners can hold the power that comes with the kind of voice that propels the situation along? It is true that both good teaching and learning mean taking risks, and yet they are not the same risks. As educators working with adults in non-traditional ways, we try to narrow the gulf between ourselves and the learners. This is important and comes from a place of caring, and yet it can become a farce when the surface structure and the deep structure of the event do not match.

To question the power dynamics of education for migrant farm workers in this country entails a critical look at the mythology surrounding “America.” In her book Chinamen, Maxine Hong Kingston describes the creation and nurturing of the myths generated and carried by newcomers, by those trying to get here, and by the ideology of the dominant culture. These myths feed the illusion that this is the land of freedom and opportunity, where all are treated equally, or, at the very least, where anyone can make a good living and help their family. In one study, a farm worker was quoted as saying that the news from Texas as it filtered down to his hometown in Mexico was that “jobs can be found but it is hard labor, under the sun all day; the food is no good but you make good money (...) I wanted to be able to send money home because that was the only sign my family would have that I was doing well” (Velázquez, 1993, p. 98). This is hope in the human soul that refuses to die. It also feeds into a hegemonic system of beliefs that supports an economy anchored in shameful working and living conditions for the very people who feed it.
CONCLUSION

There is a little-known history of working class self-education in the U.S., and of community publishing (Gregory, 1991). This kind of self-education may very well be the only hope of an educational project that attempts to "compute the value" of those things that lie outside the narrow measurements of traditional systems of education and social assistance, an educational project that is beyond hypocrisy and truly relevant to a migrant learning community's real situation and aspirations. Under what conditions could such a project flourish? What would propel it along? The answers can only be found in the making of the path. As educators, we can not "empower" other people, and the impulse that leads us to feel that we can should be problematized along with other critical aspects of adult migrant education addressed above: the history of Californian agricultural labor, the goals of worker and immigrant education and constructions of knowledge and identity.

Being a truly multi-cultural society must allow for diverse definitions of what this place is. The idea that life here has one composition is an illusion. To base educational programs on such myths is not only absurd. It is cruel. It wastes time. To say "you need to know this before you can live here" to people who already live here and have since before the border is to feed the belief system that places newcomers or not-so-newcomers in "sub" categories that imply that what they do now is not a life yet. In order to find new ways to move through information that is not traditionally valued in educational settings, there is a need for honesty in the kind of "culture of the immigrant" that is promoted and a critical look at the relationship between education (the creation and nurturing of knowledge) and community development, between the makers of educational policies and programs, and their so-called beneficiaries. This entails a rethinking of what and who count as being valid.

The foundations exist already. There is an extensive and powerful knowledge base within the social networks of information and mutual aid that sustain the moving, housing and working of Mexican migrant farm workers in California. Without these invisible (to the dominant culture) networks, farm workers would not have the information and assistance necessary to make the risky choices of their migrant lives. They both live in their own world separate from that of the dominant culture and are very much affected by conditions imposed by that culture. These include conditions effecting immigration policies, racism, anti-immigration sentiment, food costs, housing conditions, pesticide use and market demands for low-cost fruits and vegetables. Further research is needed to document the currents and processes of farmworker information exchange in order to envision their metamorphosis into the deliberate comings-together of a learning community with an agenda that starts in its own heartbeat.
Facilitating opportunities for individuals and communities to build alliances, and to build on existing alliances in deliberate ways can be the seed of a different kind of educational project.
Building Character Relations

In this silent exercise, one actor starts an action. A second actor joins and, silently, through clear physical gestures, develops some kind of relationship with the first actor, who must play into the relationship as well. Then a third actor joins them, then a forth and so on. The scenario builds, complicates and perhaps shifts with each additional actor (Boal, 1992, p. 133).

This exercise can be used to highlight critical interactions, both positive and negative, that occur at the workplace or in the learners’ community. Without using oral language, the actors can focus on facial and physical expressions and movements that shape the relationships between people. This is a more powerful means of expressing a situation than words allow. This scenario can be used as the “code” in a Freirean sense. Moreover, through an additional step, the participants might discuss the scenario and then choose an image to represent the critical piece of it that they would like to explore. This moment should be frozen in a human sculpture which can then serve as the code.

Follow the Master

This exercise is from Boal’s section on “masks and rituals.” Basically these exercises are designed to help the participants become aware of the actions and masks that they live unconsciously every day of their lives. The exercises help us to understand and look behind the things that we do without thinking and to discover the layers that lie under the masks that we wear. In Follow the master, an actor starts to move about and talk as she normally does while the others “try to capture and reproduce her mask. It is important not to caricature, but to reproduce the inner force which drives the actor to be as he is (...) trying not merely to copy appearances, but to reproduce the inner creative forces which produce these appearances” (Boal, 1992, p. 139).

This exercise would be quite interesting to try with not one but two actors in some kind of interaction, an insider-outsider interaction for example. This would be useful in unmasking the interactions between a Mexican farmworker and a grower, for example, or a bank teller or service provider. This exercise looks at the outer displays and at the characteristics and emotions that are hidden.
by these outer displays. This could be useful to people who live in this society while being denied access to it. There is so much about the dominant culture that is not understood. It could help to answer questions such as: “Why did people vote for Proposition 187?” and “Why do some gringos like Mexicans?”

Again, the theater exercise can be used as a code. From the discussion of what transpired in the piece, one could facilitate the creation of a web composed of drawings and/or words or sentences that label the masks and rituals that were uncovered. Any number of literacy activities could be drawn from such a code: collages, murals, poems, oral and written stories, Language Experience stories, songs, and educational projects.

Multiple Image of Oppression

In this exercise, the participants freeze in images of being oppressed. The participants then re-sculpt the images to show their idea of the opposite of this oppressive situation, or how things should ideally be. Third, the participants display their original images of oppression again and then move in slow motion from these into their ideal images. Next, the participants return once again to their original images of oppression and then move in ways that are inherent or that make sense within those images. Is there an inherent way to move toward the ideal? This exercise throws light on the distance and the path between the way things are and the ideal and can stimulate much creative thinking (Boal, 1992, p. 174-177).

In a similar vein, there is an alternate called Multiple image of happiness. This an important variation because, especially for educators who do not have life conditions very similar to the learners’, it is crucial not to allow ideas of who the learners are to degenerate into uni-dimensional caricatures. Theater of the Oppressed is not only about uncovering oppression. It is also (and perhaps more importantly) about uncovering the imagination in all its ability and yearning to create a better world. Multiple image of happiness can uncover the participants hopes and dreams in all their varieties and layers (Boal, 1992, p. 177-180). Again, the point as it relates to literacy is to find diverse and creative ways to see and dialogue about what learners already do and want to change and do in their lives.

The Two Revelations of Saint Teresa

This is an exercise which can give the group a general idea of the problems in their world and how people deal with them. In The Two Revelations, the group is divided into pairs of a particular make-up (parent and adolescent child, manager and worker, man and woman, etc.) They decide what their relationship is and where they will meet. Then, they separate and each decides what their
secret is. It must be something very very important, something that will very much affect their relationship (for better or worse) with the other person. Next, they come together and chat casually for a few minutes until the facilitator calls out: “The first revelation!” and one person tells their secret (all pairs simultaneously). They talk for a few more minutes and see how the dynamic between them changes as a result of the first revelation. Then, the facilitator says: “The second revelation!” at which point the second person in each pair discloses their secret. Again, the pair deals with the newly shared information in some way. Then, after a few minutes more, the facilitator says: “One of you must go!” at which point one person in each pair leaves, maybe forever, maybe to go get something special to bring back and celebrate, who knows.

In talking through the exercise afterward, the facilitator should elicit from the group the kinds of secrets that each character disclosed as well as the reactions of one person and then of the other. Were the characters accepting of each other or not? What kinds of stereotypes emerged between the characters in their interactions? In what ways can they be categorized? What were the hidden messages in what was communicated? [In a workshop led by Boal, for example, the parents were implicitly telling their adolescent children “you are no longer what I want you to be” while the children were essentially saying “I am myself, I am not you.”]

Again, this exercise can be a powerful code in the problem-posing sense, exposing the kinds of issues that inhabit the lives of the people in the group. In this way, it can be used as a kind of needs assessment. It is also good practice for doing Forum Theater because it requires the participants to quickly shift and adapt to a new situation or dynamic (Boal, 1992, p. 159-160).

**Forum Theater**

In using a problem-posing, Freirean approach, this is a powerful technique to integrate into the literacy goal of “reading the world” because it is a kind of rehearsal for action in the “real world outside.” By conceiving of and acting out changes to the dramatic sequence in the theater, spectators have the chance to unite, and feel the conflicts in uniting, theory with practice, ideas with their actual realization. This is a visible, physical form of Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by which people under oppression become subjects, not mere objects, of their own history. Though Forum Theater is not in fact change in the real world outside, “within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one”. It could very well be life-changing action for individual spect-actors, or for the collective group, hopefully stimulating them to act in the world (Boal, 1985, p. 141).

Briefly, *Forum Theater* consists of a scenario played out by actors, dealing with a theme that will be strongly felt by the spectators, “an oppressive reality
shown in images [which themselves are real]”. The Joker, through various techniques outlined by Boal, then facilitates a process in which the spectators challenge the unfolding of the dramatic action by taking over the roles in it and taking different action. They in turn are challenged by the original actors, who make it difficult for the spectators to reach their ultimate goal. Thus, breaking the oppression is not easy. Change must fight for its life. It is a dialectical process. It is not magic. Through dramatic action occurs dialogue and debate as well as practice for action in the real world (Boal, 1992, chapter 4).

The main criteria for Forum Theater, as specified by Boal, are the following:

- There are specific rules to follow, outlined by Boal. However, they can be altered to fit the context. The two main rules which must stand are: “spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action and these spect-actors must prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives. That is the most important thing”.
- It is important to choose a situation in which alternatives exist that can be explored (i.e., not fatalist theater)
- The drama should be theatrical and stimulating, inspiring the spectators to act out possible alternatives, not only to discuss them
- The presentation is not of a model, but of an anti-model, to stimulate discussion.
- Sometimes the debate is more important than finding a solution, it depends on the urgency of the situation and what needs to happen with the spect-actors (where they need to take it). It is “a theater which, at its best, asks the right questions at the right times”
- The Role of the Joker. The Joker is the facilitator in Forum Theater. “The Joker is a midwife. (...) The Joker must assist the birth of all ideas, of all actions”
- There is no end to it (Boal, 1992, chapter 4).
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