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The Impact of Philanthropy

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jonathan F. Denzler

June 2016

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ABSTRACT

Forwarding a narrative framework of philanthropic impact this thesis problematizes the evaluation methods used by social engagement organizations to measure the impact or change that they are contributing to in a community. By focusing on the example of food access, and the corresponding language of the “food desert”, this project locates the power to control the framing of social issues in the hands of funders as opposed to those who experience the real life effects of living in poverty or resource-poor communities. This process then lets the philanthropists set a goal and meet that goal without ever truly communicating or understanding the complexity of factors that affect a community politic. Instead, by looking to the community’s stories of a social concern an engagement plan can better reflect the needs and interests of that community.

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INTRODUCTION

Looking to the active conversations that are ongoing within the fields of philanthropy and social engagement, one may notice that there is a certain momentum. By “momentum” I mean to implicate the dynamic between the fields’ leaders and followers; seasoned “experts” educate while their students continue to work and develop paradigms. This is important to note for this project and its beginning in so far as the philanthropic space very much mirrors other academic or social knowledge production spaces. In understanding similarities between the spheres of the Academy and philanthropy, we can better assess the ways in which this thesis seeks to comment on philanthropy as a social model.

Without making too broad a statement about philanthropy, the formal idea of philanthropy as society has come to understand it is reaching a maturation point. The field of philanthropy itself is formalizing around shared practices and/or beliefs, ones which we can begin to identify within the thoughts that shape philanthropic efforts.

While critiques of the philanthropic process are not new, the perspective on philanthropy’s overall success given certain dynamics and exchanges is what interests us in this work. Not only does the arrangement of power between funder and the funded dictate action, but the fact that there even *is* an arrangement necessitates a certain

perspective of the dynamics in philanthropy. How we determine success, how we measure success, or how we view the concept of success is in part determined by the arrangement of power relations and discourses that shape philanthropic knowledge production.

This thesis makes two core arguments about philanthropy and its paradigms of social engagement theory. First, the philanthropic space is actively adopting a paradigm referred to in this project as “impact-oriented philanthropy.” By this we mean that projects are valued based on what “impact” they produce. “Impact” is proof of “moving the needle” within communities in relation to static, data-driven, reference points determined by experts in the field. As an example, Community A has X number of children who lack quality early childhood education, and a project will have an “impact” if after the project X minus >0 children have access to quality education. Therefore we can evaluate the success of a project based on the measurable change it produces within an affected community. To support this argument this thesis will look to the theory of “collective impact” and its connection with data-driven measurements to identify the trend within the field.

Secondly, this thesis will argue that through the example of food insecurity we can recognize both the limitations of this paradigm also potentially negative repercussions. The primary example in this thesis will be that of the “food desert” which is understood in the broad sense as a geographic area which lacks regular, affordable access to fresh produce. The food desert represents an “impactable” definition that

allows a project to measure its success based on the movement of a community in relation to the definition of the social issue.

First, this project will identify that the notion of a food desert is an inefficient means by which to communicate the lived experiences of the food-insecure household, therefore limiting the fidelity of the measurement of the term. Secondly, and more importantly, in the use of the term food desert we can identify that the impact paradigm of philanthropy necessitates the replacing of an experience with the definition of the issues itself. By this I mean that the name we give to an experience becomes the primary means of connection with the issue as opposed to an understanding of the lived experience resulting from that social issue.

The first chapter of this thesis will seek to defend what is referred to a “tactical rhetoric” as the primary tool used to support the two core arguments. By tactical I refer to the fact that language and context are interchangeable in how they affect the flow of a discourse. By this I mean that language is unknowable outside its deployment within a space, and at the same time the space is primed with discursive meaning affecting the introduction of language(s). Moreover, the critic is always a product and/or a part of this movement and thus is never separate from the change and flow of a discourse. A tactical rhetoric is a framework that looks to discourses in their relationship to other such stories in order to provide the tools to negotiate the relationship with discourses.

This thesis will first introduce scholars Alain Badiou, Walter Fischer, Michel Foucault, Sylvain Lazarus, and Michael Calvin McGee to argue that discourse is a tool of

engagement and change, a tool used to affirmatively critique the state of, in this case, philanthropic paradigms. We will then identify what has been referred to so far as “impact philanthropy,” or the paradigm of data-driven evaluation of community change. This discussion will also introduce the history of the term “food desert” to identify the means by which such a paradigm plays out in active community relationships. By looking to the use of term within the field of Philanthropy, this project will create a perspective which allows for the intersection of a tactical perspective of the flows of discourses and their impacts on the framing of existing projects.

Finally, in the third chapter, we will propose what is referred to as “narrative philanthropy,” or a paradigm for evaluating success separate from a notion of impact as defended in the preceding chapter. Turning to the work of Walter Fischer, this chapter will indicate that storytelling offers a nuanced perspective of community experience that offer a beneficial alternative to the existing paradigm of impact. By looking to the stories of communities in North Denver, this project will identify the nuances of the experiences of food insecurity in a way that better connects the underlying factors/causes of the community’s story with food access.

This chapter represents the start of a theory of narrative philanthropy as opposed to a formal paradigm. To propose a fixed logic would contradict the critique of philanthropic paradigms as they currently stand, or in light of this thesis’s core argument regarding impact. When one proposes a set paradigm, the idea of “impact” is only moved to fall under a different category--it represents a shift of the title, not of the

function. The final chapter looks to identify that the stories of food access told by policy makers do not resonate even with the data we collect about food access. By identifying this tension-- perhaps better understood as a disconnect-- this thesis wishes to set the stage for the next step in the conversation about storytelling and food access.

CHAPTER ONE

Towards a Tactical Rhetoric

In his article The Political Technology of Individuals Michel Foucault writes:

Even when we kill or when we are killed, even when we make war or when we ask for support as unemployed, even when we vote for or against a government that cuts social services expenses and increases defense spending, even in those cases, we are thinking beings, and we do these things not only on the ground of universal rules or behavior but also on the specific ground of a historical rationality.¹

This passage is a haunting foresight into the contemporary factors that plague social institutions. Foucault documents the construction of threats, the choice of whose interests to serve, or in a broader sense the recognition of the gap between the experience of oppression and the sites of change and/or action. This passage also illuminates the beauty of Foucault's project. It serves to offer a meaningful perspective of not necessarily optimism, but a *recognition* of the role of the agent within a paradigm of

¹ Rabinow, Paul, ed. *Power the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*. United States: NEW Press (NY), 2000. 405

action. This is why the “we” is the key nomination of the passage as Foucault moves to connect himself with the reader. “We are killed” recognizes both a connection with the agent who has gone ahead, but also the connection that historical actions play in governing the context that we might choose to call the “present.” And yet, the ending of the passage once again serves as a chilling reminder of the possibility of our assumption of agency or individual action. Our actions are tied to the patterns left by other actions, and yet also fixed or created by the context. If this is the case Foucault asks, how is that we actually *think*?

As we move forward in the piece, the reader begins to learn more about Foucault’s perspective of the agent. As he writes:

From the state’s point of view, the individual exists insofar as what he does is able to introduce even a minimal change in the strength of the state, either in a positive or negative direction. It is only insofar as an individual is able to introduce this change that the state has to do with him. And sometimes what he has to do for the state is to live, to work, to produce, to consume, and sometimes what he has to do is die.²

To be recognized is to act, and sometimes this acting is to end the potential to act further. It is in our action as an agent that we can be recognized as agent. When the strength of the State is the primary goal, what is required of the agent is a performance based on what she is told to think. Or, as Foucault would argue, what she is *allowed* to think. The state reinforces its place by keeping the state of affairs as they are. As we move in relation to the strength of the State we can move to create a new state, one that contains a

² *ibid* 409

new element . Thus the paradox of the state is the need to maintain it while allowing for the introduction of novelty and newness to the extent that it does not change the state. The guardians of the state are masters of illusions. They are able to convince the captive audience that the rabbit was not always in the hat.

The state is incentivized to perpetuate what is *believed* to be change or novelty in a way that is not *authentically* change. Take the 2008 election of Barack Obama, for example: was not this the perceived moment of change? The end of racism, the emergence of the progressive era of American politics? Instead what has occurred is not to be considered a failure but instead -- in the vast majority of cases -- a continuation of the status quo. We can look to the military practices of the US, the lack of a connection with the global community, the expansion of poverty and supports for the rich with the list ever going. What then changes is not the focus or the policy, but the figurehead of the process. We can imagine this in a variety of industries, disciplines, and states. The subject changes but not the subject's position.

To think change is to think outside the process of repetition. To propose and to speak what has not been spoken in a real and spiritual sense. This is the emergence from the Cave -- the blinding by the light -- only with the idea that one must return.³ This is the figure of Thinker in the passages from Foucault, an agent who is able to muster the tools of the state against it in a denial of its perpetuation. This is the Philosopher, the Dreamer, the Radical. Whatever terms we use to describe that agent, what remains is the

³ Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968. 193

drive of the militant in the search for what some may call “Truth,” and others “Love.” The role of the Radical, the Critic, or he whom Foucault would call the “Thinker” is to investigate our claims of novelty or to challenge the praise of apparent change. It is to call into question progress when such progress does not trickle down or include those who need to be a part of such a process.

Why then does this thesis seek to engage a conversation with the State through the field of rhetoric? Rhetoric has itself undergone and is undergoing a process that is shifting what the state of the discipline is and/or what its object is. Condit and Lucaites offer a useful reflection on this process in their preface to Crafting Inequality:

Rhetoric is undergoing a major revival in the closing years of the twentieth century. Treated since the seventeenth century as the ‘harlot of the arts’ it has in the past years become the darling of human sciences. Whereas the past scholars frequently treated rhetoric and public discourse as simple or ‘mere’ epiphenomena, the contemporary rhetorical turn coincides with the revision of critical theory and a postmodern shift away from realist epistemologies, including a fairly thorough rejection of rigid objectivism, foundationalism, and essentialism in understanding the human social condition. The result has been a more or less sustained focus on discourse, textuality, and signification as the ‘material’ core of social and political relationships.⁴

“Rhetoric,” in a broad sense, can be referred to as the practice of recognizing the material implications of discourse. A focus on the phenomenon of the interactions between communication and meaning production. Another way to think/talk about rhetoric is to specify that it takes a tactical perspective on how discourse is deployed in relation to the state. This is not the same language used by Condit and Lucaites, but it remains

⁴ Condit, Celeste Michelle, and John Louis. Lucaites. *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. ix

consistent with their project on the ideograph. They argue that “equality” takes on different political meanings based on the agent in charge and what the agent is trying to accomplish. Equality was used early in the British plan of colonization in order to bring “justice” to savages and thus make them equal (p. 30-32). This same phrase is used later by Civil Right activists in the 1960s as a rallying cry for marches on Washington. Thus the use of the term is motivated by the need to justify an action or a tactic of engagement. To call for equality was a conscious, tactical decision by leaders such as Martin Luther King, whereas other tactics of separation were taken by Malcolm X.

The field of rhetoric is uniquely positioned to play such a role in engaging with philanthropy. This is due to both the focus on the novelty of language and also to the role that discourse plays within its conversations. Here novelty is understood as introducing a new means to communicate about an object, or using language in a new way. This is perhaps one of the core assumptions of a post-structural rhetoric: that language moves and changes in its uses. Words change their functional meaning based on the contexts in which they are used. Take the notion of “homosexual” or “gay.” The terms themselves are used very differently and have different functional meanings based on the timeframe during which each was used.. Accordingly, what is key is not necessarily the term itself, but rather the interaction the context has with the name. As Edward Schiapa writes: “Because definitions affirm or deny specific interests and encourage particular linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors the choice of definitions is always normative and

prescriptive”.⁵ Consequently, the deployment of a term always has a context, both in terms of its motivation and also its use. The name is given to the event as it occurs, but is also itself located within a contextualized networks of meaning and usages.

This again aligns with Foucault’s focus on thinking in that the use of words is both tied to their historical usage and must emerge within a unique context. Words die out, are re-claimed, or are re-deployed. Within discourse we can observe the process of the renaming of an object. A naming that can move from a positive connotation to a negative. Moreover, the speaker may wish to completely switch what a phrase or name means.

To refer to the rhetorical connection with these flows of power, this project will use the term “tactical rhetoric.” This identifies that the use of a term or a story is always tied to the normative vision of that discourse. Therefore we choose to “deploy” narratives in a pragmatic sense, identifying that we use language to move a flow either in terms of self-interest or of broader community factors. The speaker is always reacting to the tactics of another as they intersect with each other. Before more formally referring to a tactical rhetoric, it is key to note that this perspective does not seek to apply an ethical conditioning to the notion of the tactic, but rather serves as a description of the motivations and/or impacts of a tactic.⁶ In the same way that a tactical rhetoric can be

⁵ Schiappa, Edward. *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003. 68

⁶ Nakayama, Thomas K., and Robert L. Krizek. "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995): 291-309. doi:10.1080/00335639509384117.

used to create the conditions for a war, it is also used to buy lettuce from a farmer's market. When I ask if the lettuce is for sale, I am deploying a narrative of consumption which interacts with the narrative of the seller.

A Tactical Rhetoric

To be better able to conceptualize a "tactic," it is useful to make a quick connection with the sport of football. In the game of football the goal is simple: to score a goal. Each team has eleven players who are arranged by the manager based on the tactics of the other team, or the strength's weaknesses of either team. The tactic is both a meaningful plan of attack to the goal, but also may play absolutely no role in the goal that perhaps wins a game. The perfect tactic can be undermined by a slip by a defender and the quick movements of a striker. A midfielder may give the ball away far too easily and undermine the plan of attack. The football pitch is same for both teams and therefore the tactics chosen by either team are filtered or influenced by the same constraints as the opposite dugout.

The tactics of the football field offer a useful introduction of how "tactic" is understood in this piece. First, the speaker is playing on the same field as another, but may have a different vantage point that gives a different relationship within the space itself. The rules are the same but how they are treated by a team affects their usefulness as a whole. Furthermore, the best tactics may be undermined and the other team might

still win. A tactic is then a fluid plan which helps the ball get to the goal, but may not in any way occupy a direct role in the process. A tactic is an arrangement hoping to facilitate the goal.

Within the formal cannon of the field of rhetoric the notion of a “tactical rhetoric” is first introduced by Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek in their article “Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric.” Nakayama and Krizek turn to Michel de Certeau to first articulate that a strategy is the “calculation of a power relationship that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated.”⁷ In other words, a strategic action is one that involves an identified subject who is able to facilitate the power relationship within a situation in order to achieve some end. For the authors, the notion of “white” is a strategic movement by the powerful to achieve an identity as normal; in other words, to create the identity of “white” as the center of normative action. In this way, the “white” agent engages with power relations which offer her a benefit based on her status as a member of the center. The authors then argue -- once again in the words of de Certeau -- that a tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy.”⁸ Thus, the tactic is a movement unrelated to a center. The subject is a response.

⁷ ibid 195

⁸ ibid 295

What is interesting in both of these cases is that the subject is either labeled as tactical or strategic, and is always motivated by a recognition of the individual. For strategy the agent is an individual, or an autonomous agent, and is able to use power relations to fit her needs. And in the case of the tactic, it is the tactic which motivates the identity. The movement that is unrelated to the center is articulated as an identity which is not center. Thus can we not say that strategies and tactics always deploy identities -- either in response or prescriptively? For Nakayama and Krizek this understanding offers a new form of critique in the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari, which is named “deterritorialization.” The category of whiteness can then be made visible in its invisibility through the identification of its territory.⁹ As Nakayama and Krizek argue in their conclusion, “...the imbalance between discussions of gender and discussions on whiteness stems from a power differential between that which is tactical and that which is strategic.”¹⁰ Thus the challenge to oppression can be articulated through a tactical response to the strategic deployment of power relationships.

While at its core I see no objection to the rhetorical challenging of power structures within a situation (in fact this may be its role), this understanding of tactics seems to undermine the truly revolutionary potential of separation from the center, or what Foucault has called the State. For in the challenging of an identity as the state of the discursive space, Nakayama and Krizek still seek to privilege an identity in response. Thus the state is challenged by another state still founded on one of the core dynamics of

⁹ *ibid* 294

¹⁰ *ibid* 305

the existing state. Even if this identity is undefined except from the opposition to whiteness, does this tactic not ultimately translate into a strategy? In other words, even if the aggressor's movement is not motivated by the center, is it not motivated by exclusion from the center? Thus this tactic fails to redefine the names of elements within the situation, either remaining within the structure of the strategy or defining the elements in a way that is related to the definitions of the structure. It situates Identity as the means to political action and thus preserves the logic of identity. Therefore, the challenge to a center by an identified body is not deterritorialization, but instead reterritorialization. It returns a flow to the code.

Instead this project will seek to articulate a “tactical rhetoric” that can be used a tool to both engage with the discursive state of philanthropy and also teleologically comment on the practices of the philanthropic space. While this project considers the concern with the projection of a “rigid objectivism” it also recognizes that in the search for an understanding of the material implications of discourse is necessarily a question of Ethics. In other words, in order to identify harmful and damaging discourse, the Critic relies on the ability to perceive the material implications of the means of communication in a way that passes an ethical judgement on such actions. This is why Foucault plays a large role in framing this project, for Ethical” here is not tied to traditional political philosophy and questions of good/evil. Instead Ethics are changes to the state. An Ethical change is one which transforms the underlying conditions without falling back into the trap of Nakayama and Krizek. An Ethic is an escape from the state as it is.

Defining Philanthropy

The State addressed in this project is loosely referred to as “philanthropy.” This term is used to name the broad process by which contemporary nonprofits and grassroots organizations receive funding from foundations and donors to motivate responses to social issues. A philanthropist is an agent offering their wealth to invest in community change, often through a foundation’s grants or funding of nonprofit activities. Frequently the issues are passions of agents who have started organizations or those at the top of the process who control what is funded. Other organizations engage with the process but are not permanent members. These include community action teams, town hall meeting attendees, political representatives, community organizers, and often those affected by the issues -- which is the focus of this piece. More specifically, this piece will look to the philanthropy community behind Denver’s response to the issue of food insecurity in order to illuminate the nuances of the process and the key stories being told.

We can look to the Gary Williams Investment Company as a prime example of philanthropy as it will be identified in this paper. This company is funded by the capital produced by Gary Williams’ investment in oil and natural gas across the United States. After retiring from active work in the energy field, Williams chose to found the Piton

Foundation in order to give money back to the state through support of early childhood learning and physical health.¹¹

The investment company and the Piton Foundation both released calls for Letters of Interest (LOIs) asking nonprofits or other qualified organizations to submit bids for projects that meet the call of the request. In the summer of 2015 the call asked for early childhood education providers to submit plans of action to support early childhood development. These LOIs were then screened by the Foundation's leadership after which funds were distributed to the projects. Typically these calls will be limited to 501(c)(3)s or other formal nonprofits within a geographic area such as the city of Denver. Therefore philanthropy in this example is the redistribution of wealth in ways that attempt to create a social good.

While a focus on philanthropy is not a traditional focus on the militant philosopher/rhetorician, I find that it mirrors Foucault's project. To question this process is to offer the continuation of a broader project regarding the role that power plays in determining action. This is even more critical when this process aims to create "social good." Gary Williams is able to make such investments because he and his company were efficient capitalists, sites of power production and distribution. While it would be unfair and perhaps harmful to attempt a summary of Foucault's project in a single phrase of passage, if we were to do so for sake of clarity it would be this term: "power." Power controls how movements move, how people think, and what actions we take.

¹¹ "Gary Community Investments." Gary Community Investments. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://www.garycommunity.org/?_ga=1.82969106.500176835.1447641417.

“Governmentality” (as an example of the implications of Foucault’s project) in this formal sense is a question of how the structures are used to control movement or what it is that is thought to be novel or progressive. As Foucault writes:

Whereas the end of sovereignty is internal to itself and possesses its own intrinsic instruments in the shape of its laws, the finality of government resides in the things it manages and in the pursuit of perfection and intensification of the processes it directs; and the instruments of government, instead of being laws, now come to be a range of multiform tactics.¹²

In the most direct sense, this project will argue that philanthropy is, in fact, a tactic or a form of a tactic as pursued by the State. Philanthropy is a site of control, a site of discipline. It determines which conversations about change are possible by giving them credibility or capital based on the interests or needs of philanthropic organizations. And yet, this is not to argue that philanthropy does not on its own seek to control and produce apparatuses of control. Instead it is to argue that philanthropy is itself the natural extension of the logic of the capitalist superstructure. In an era with decreasing social supports for communities, the philanthropic process is playing an increasingly essential role in the perpetuation of the state. The philanthropic space takes on much the same role as Catholic Charities or other religious organizations in communities throughout the country’s history.

We can identify two arguments connecting the philanthropic process with neo-capitalism. First, the nonprofit sector allows agents that are “socially conscious” to take on roles that seemingly align with their personal beliefs. This provides for professional

¹² Rabinow, Paul, ed. *Power the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*. United States: NEW Press (NY), 2000. 211

careers in the bureaucracy of philanthropy. Take, for example, a business student who does not work for Wall Street but instead is employed by a major foundation using “socially-responsible” investment practices to support socially-oriented community companies. While the subject may be tied to a different part, or a different branch of the State, the apparatus is still the same. Capital becomes the primary connection between social good and social investment, i.e “social change.” Thus an agent is given a position within the system that is aligned to making a change or an impact, but often such programs are merely replications of the same process. In the case of the Gary Williams Investment Company, the capital is still capital. Money made by exploiting the earth is funding social change.

Secondly, philanthropy allows the elites from the state to “give back;” the funder is given the means to control the process as a whole. One can make large tax-deductible donations, add their name to a grant, or pick an interest to which they want to donate funds. We ought not ignore that such giving does impact the world, and organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation do make a difference in the lives of many. The tension that emerges, however, stems from the fact that power earned in corporate structures carries over into philanthropy. Those who have “won” capitalism are given the keys to creating social change. Therefore the power to make a change does not actually result in a change but rather becomes a signifier of how good a capitalist one is.

For the purpose of this project, it is key to recognize why this focus on philanthropy is justified within a rhetorical space and also how such an engagement can

model what Foucault offers in terms of the role of the state. Even if the brief arguments above are not convincing on their own in terms of why philanthropy is an extension of the state, the next few pages will propose that the industry as a whole represents a continuation of existing power structures -- specifically around the right to name or the right to decide what conversations are considered valuable within a state. What we learn from Foucault is that each moment of the historical epoch can be recognized as taking part in a state of stasis in which only certain truths are illuminated or accepted as Truth. These truths are treated as ethical or unethical, or productive vs unproductive, based on their resonance with other practices and lenses provided by a State. This is why we can look to changing social opinions in addition to changing discourse about those actions.

Slavery serves as the stereotypical example in the American consciousness of how we moved from a population that accepted the practice to one that did not. While this is an oversimplification of the process, the core idea is evident from our readings of history or the active conversations around the issues today. And yet, we are all too aware that American slavery has not been eliminated but has appeared in new forms. Some we have outsourced to sweatshops and others we have shifted to economic and political disenfranchisement and disguised as “human trafficking.” The story and the terms we use are different, but the underlying practice remains the same. Accordingly, in some ways the state has not changed, but in others it has. There are holdovers in practice and meaning between states, but we are able to tell the story from the current situation which

then influences how we view other historical moments. We have found new ways to talk about slavery.

A Rhetorical Ethic of Philanthropy

In order to set the stage for the rest of this piece, it is critical to identify the formal relationship between philanthropy and rhetoric. It is one thing to argue that philanthropy or the actions of philanthropists are rhetorical, and another to identify a rhetorical ethic of philanthropy. While thus far philanthropy has been posited as an extension of the state, this should not ignore that it also contains the potential to undermine that state. This is the same as economics, government, or any other social practice. While all might be critiqued for lack of engagement, this does not undermine the potential to be different. It also is apparent that this project asks a new question about the rhetoric of the philanthropic sphere, but locates its viewpoint from within the philanthropic sphere as opposed to the Academy. Thus this piece ought be considered rhetorical in the sense that it asks the questions of how it is that we philanthropize tactically? To put this another way: how do we use the logic of philanthropy for affirmative change and praxis?

To articulate the condition of the tactical, we turn to the work of Sylvain Lazarus and Alain Badiou on the notion of a “politics of thought.” At the core of this project are two statements: first, “people think,” and second, “thought is a relation of the Real”.¹³

¹³ Badiou, Alain. *Metapolitics*. London: Verso, 2005. 50

Consequently, for Lazarus the name is a “thought-relation-of-the-Real.” A few key points from this quote. First, Lazarus chooses to articulate that the thought is a relation of the real, and not with the Real.¹⁴ Second, in these two statements, Lazarus chooses to identify two separate processes: the first is that people think, and the other is that there is the action behind the thought. Can we then say that the thought is prior to the relation which is thought? This would seem to violate the second statement, for we would be thinking the thought in its relation to the Real. This is a question of position. The first relationship thinks the thought in relation to an object which is not thought, and the second thinks thought as thought.

This is why Lazarus is, in some sense, critical of philosophy; he banishes it from the anthropology of the name (the name he gives to his own project). For Lazarus, philosophy is a “thought-relation-of-thought” and therefore not a thinking-in-relation, but a thinking-of-relation.¹⁵ In this way, the only authentic relationship with the name is a “thought-thinking-the-Real,” which for Lazarus is the “name.” We must think the name, or the experience that is named. To clarify what Lazarus is saying here it might be useful to substitute the name with the phrase “phenomenon” or “appearance of.” In other words, the phenomenon appears and therefore is namable as a name. In the following paragraphs this distinction is clarified by the use of Name as opposed to name. The name is the phenomenon, and the Name is the identification given to the phenomenon.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ ibid

The name “Rhetoric” represents -- or posits the appearance of -- the bridge between the two processes: the gap which makes the two. The “Name” is that which is assigned to the name. The Name is itself not a thought but a symbol in relation with with the Real. Thus, rhetoric is the mediation between the Name and the relation with the Name. Rhetoric does not ever claim to know the experience apart from the symbolization of the experience. We use labels and terms to signify the experience of touching or relating with another, an object, or an event. And yet, this should not be taken as claiming that the experience is not itself rhetorical. The experience of the event (the phenomenon of)-- what Lazarus calls the name -- is rhetorical in that it moves or influences action. The tactical rhetoric is the reaction of the rhetoric to the experience.

How else can we state this relationship? As an example we can return more formally to Foucault’s work on the notion of the “homosexual.” He writes:

There is no question that the appearance in the nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, and pederasty, and ‘psychic hermaphorism’ made possible a strong advance of social controls on this area of aversion.¹⁶

The act which is named “homosexual” exists prior to the name being assigned, but it is not yet thinkable as “homosexual” and thus “homosexuality;” the action of a subject position does not exist prior to the name. Therefore we can say that “nameability” is a product of the conditions of the situation, or, that in Foucault’s term, the name is a product of the “sayability” of the named. The name is a placeholder for what Lazarus

¹⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Edited by Robert J. Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990. 101

would call the “Name.” The homosexual act is rhetorical without this name, and thus the tactic is the attempt to name and control the movement of the phenomenon past the experience.

Consequently, we can recognize the gap that is the function of rhetoric. First there is the relationship with the name, and then there is the relationship of the Name with the name of the Name. There is the experience and the verbal identification that there was/is an experience. As a result, by adding a label to the “experience of” we are not naming the Name (the experience of), but naming the name of the Name (the symbolic representation of). The name of “tree” cannot be said to be the same thing in utterance as that which is named (my experience of the tree).

This is also key in that the tree is not a thing but the intersection of constantly moving things. Water flowing up the stem, the bugs and termites biting into the wood, the leaves floating in the wind. The experience of the tree is a relationship with the multiplicity that is contained in the name “tree.” Hence this project posits that what is named rhetoric is the mediation between the name and the name of the name. What I choose to label the experience of the tree does not change my relationship with the tree, but does affect my ability to deploy the name “tree” in another context.

And yet what we mean by mediation is itself complicated, for there is not a direct relationship between the name and the name of the name. This is due to the fact *that the name of the name has no relationship with the name*. The name of the name is purely a nomination and not a prescription. This is what makes the “name of the name” distinct

from the command by Lazarus to not name the Name. To name the name is to equate the name with a unit that is not the name. This name that is represented as the name of the name is not taken to be in any way representative of the name, but instead this is just a placeholder that allows us to symbolize its happening. Thus the gap between the name and the name of the name is the articulation of the name, for in its appearance the name is no longer apparent. This is why rhetoric is treated as tactical, for what I choose to nominate as the name is contained within the field of language in general. Much like the manager on the football field arranging players, the decision to name in a certain way affects the ability to get to the goal.

The name of the name of the name can also be articulated as the sign. As Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) write,

Now contents are not 'signifieds' dependent upon a signifier in any way, nor are they 'objects' in any kind of relation of causality of the subject. They have their own formalization and have no relation of symbolic correspondence or linear causality with the forms of expression: the two forms are in reciprocal presupposition, and they can be abstracted from each other in a very relative way because they are two sides of a single assemblage.¹⁷

Thus the representation of the object does not presuppose the object that is being represented, but, in fact, both emerge as an element of the shared assemblage. The name is an opening to the occurrence of, and the sign is the articulation of the occurrence.

Also, the sign has no effect on the contents in that the sign is but the placeholder for the contents, or, in Lazarus's terms, the singular nomination of multiplicity.

¹⁷ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. 140

From this we can uncover a notion of the tactic, for as rhetoric thinks the gap between the name and the sign, it thinks from a perspective of fluidity. The “text,” the object of a rhetoric, becomes a series of signs used in an effort to relate to the name. A tactic is recognized as a choice to deploy the sign, or a set of signs, in order to confront contingency. As Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) argue, “language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience” (p. 76). In other words, we cannot separate the name from the projection of a movement within the situation, one which we could perhaps name power. The deployment of a sign comes with a choice, an act of agency which is always constrained by the limits of the elements of the situation. Or as Badiou proposes:

These consequences affect and reorganize the body by treating the successive points within the situation. By ‘point’, we understand here simply what confronts the global situation with singular choices, with decisions that involve the ‘yes’ and the ‘no.’¹⁸

Thus the deployment of the sign tactically within a situation is the relationship between the subject and the point which is mediated by the gap.

This also raises a question of the politics of the sign. If the sign is effective in its deployment, but also shares no connection to the contents, then is the force of the sign purely transcendental? For Deleuze and Guatarri the idea of a sign is deployed within a regime of signs, or a discursive multicity of expression.¹⁹ As they write: “...signs are not

¹⁸ Badiou, Alain. *Theory of the Subject*. London: Continuum, 2009. 51

¹⁹ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. 67

signs of a thing; they are signs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, they mark a certain threshold crosses in the course of these movements.”²⁰ Thus the sign is the site of contingency in that not only is the sign separate from the content, but also that the sign *can be deployed* separate from the content.

Signs are controlled in their movement, or in their deployment, by a code.²¹ This code is that which controls the logic of movement within a situation. Thus signs are themselves arbitrary in their deployment for they have no effect, but instead it is the logic of the openness of the name which defines the meaning of the deployment of the name. Returning to Lazarus, if the name is the openness to a multiplicity, the sign is a deployment of a definition of the name. In other words, the deployment of a sign is an attempt to territorialize the movement which it signifies.

Deleuze and Guattari continue, “The relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions, in other words, to speech acts that are, and can only be, accomplished in the statement.”²² Each act of communication is the formation of a link between the order-word and social obligation. Therefore, “the only possible definition of language is the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a language at a given moment.”²³ The contingency of the sign is ordered in a regime of signs which are in themselves a product of an ordering or a logic which dictates the

²⁰ *ibid* 68

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. 79

²³ *Ibid*

relationship between content. Therefore, if rhetoric is the mediation between a name and the sign, the notion of language identifies that the sign is a product of an operation which is a redundancy of the name. The name as an openness to the thought of the name is represented within the deployed sign. This relationship does not disappear but instead can remain unnamed within the situation.

As Deleuze and Guatarri continue:

The problem is that it is not enough to establish that enunciation has this social character, since it could be extrinsic; therefore too much or too little is said about it. The social character of enunciation is intrinsically founded only if one succeeds in demonstrating how enunciation in itself implies collective assemblages.²⁴

A tactical rhetoric, then, must not only articulate the gap of the name, but also the relationship between the name and the sayability (namability) of the name. We can name the announcement of the name the naming of the name to keep consistent with Lazarus's topology, but all the while we are reminded of the redundancy of the act, the name, the eventual experience. In our enunciation of the sign we affirm that which has occurred, or that which is no longer occurring but has occurred, and thus the sign is always temporally separate/distinct from the name. This is what allows the social character of the enunciation for in the time gap the name gap appears, creating a "need" for the articulation of the event.

The social character is the code of the understandability of the sign, or the logic by which the name is named as sign. For Deleuze and Guatarri, "the meaning and syntax

²⁴ ibid 80

of language can no longer be identified independently of the speech acts they presuppose.”²⁵ Thus what is meant by language is not a statement to the other, but rather a restatement of that which has been said. This is why language always goes from “saying to saying.”²⁶ The deployment of the name always presupposes *that* sign for the name is already a social code. If the sign is always pre-deployed the tactical rhetoric is an attempt to think a relation to the name, one which is separate from the social condition of the code. In this way, while the signifier does not presuppose the signified, this does not mean that we do not redeploy signs in different contexts. Take the notion of “communism” and its many uses within politics.

This point is worth further clarification for it is some sense is the key component of this analysis that will be directly connected with the rest of this project’s focus on philanthropy. To say that rhetoric is thinking in relation to the name ought not be taken in the sense that the critic or the rhetorician is entirely separate from the name herself. Rather, the critic is in relation to the name as much as -- potentially, in a different way -- the name of the name. By this we ought recognize that the critic is not separate from the situation and even the choice of the critic is a tactic. In other words, there is no outside to this analysis, and thus when looking to the object of this project, there is no limit that we can articulate. Rather, we are articulating the actualized potential of connections.

What is then at stake for a tactical rhetoric is the deployment of signs, the mobilization of elements which share no connection with the Real but all the while

²⁵ *ibid* 78

²⁶ *ibid* 76

motivate relationships with the Real. And yet, if these meanings are fluid in their deployment and meaning based on the context, how is it that we are to articulate a truth/evil distinction? If there are no forms to relate how do we decide which signs are right/correct/ethical? The question we ought be asking is not how do we determine the meaning of the signs, but instead how ought we measure the effect of their deployment? If we cannot think of meaning as a guide then we must think relationship qua relationship.

The question of the relationship identifies the core reason why this project chooses to look at philanthropy instead of other social/political processes. At the heart of the funding process is a question of what issues are being addressed, or to what aim are funds being distributed? These social issues are named as the the name of the name, or sign, signifying the site of the appearance of the form of the social issue. The name “poverty” is but a signifier of the fact of poverty. Therefore the means we use to communicate about a social issue are always inherently estranged from the experience of that issue.

The gap between what we name and the name we give to an issue creates the space for the movement of the state in that how we talk about the issue is a condition of how the state relates to the issue. The social issues that receive valid political support are tied to the persons naming the issues and what the name seeks to perform or accomplish in its deployment. The question that this project investigates is what happens when the means that we use to talk about, communicate, or share regarding a social issue

undermine the focus on the name? What happens when the name of the name comes to replaces the name, the experience, of the named issue?

The Ideograph

This question is very much a core concern for rhetorician Michael Calvin McGee in his work on the “ideograph.”²⁷ For McGee an “ideograph” is the “unique ideological commitment” suggested by a community member’s choice of a term or phrase.²⁸ For McGee, the terms that we use are themselves containers for the political flow of a community in that when I use certain terms, I use them in a certain way as determined by my community. To put this another way, the ideograph is the story connected with a term that is privileged or supported by the power structure of the state. Therefore, the state of the American capitalist system has an incentive to use terms and discourses to maintain that state in light of its demonization of other economic practices or beliefs.

McGee’s example of the ideograph is the term “equality.” He argues that in an American context the notion of equality is used to determine a perception of a capitalist and democratic society.²⁹ Therefore the use of the term “equality” presupposes an individualistic understanding of success and outcomes, or one which takes into account the bedrock assumptions of the American political and economic system. In contrast,

²⁷ McGee, Michael Calvin. "The “ideograph”: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 1 (1980): 1-16. doi:10.1080/00335638009383499.

²⁸ *ibid* 455

²⁹ *ibid* 430

McGee argues that the Soviet notion of “equality” is one which looks to a community first as opposed to the specific agent. Therefore the term is the same, but the functional meanings are distinct based on the local culture. These contextual characteristics frame both the use of but also the choice to deploy the term.

What makes the ideograph key for this project is the focus that McGee places on how and when the term is used in order to qualify. He writes, “An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal.”³⁰ The ideograph is then not a specific or technocratic term used within a specified context such as a science lab or court of law. The term is used within an everyday, social discourse. Thus a community would use the notion of “equality” in open, public conversation. What is also the case for McGee is that the ideological commitment of the speaker is unspecific, or that while there is a vision of the normative outcome such is not concrete in terms of its understanding. The telos is equality for everyone but without a vision of what that looks like past a vision.

The ideograph is very much a question of the use of or deployment of terms of discourses. This represents the praxis of a tactical rhetoric. A question of what terms are used, or how they are arranged in order to create a perspective of a necessary outcome. To put this another way: how a subject is moved by the choice to use such narratives. If terms are used based on their context, then how it is that we deploy terms shapes the

³⁰ *ibid* 463

relationship between the term and the normative vision. The name becomes a placeholder, as we take from Lazarus, and with McGee it is given a directionality due to its ideological commitments.

It is key to remember that McGee identified himself politically as a Marxist. By this he meant that economic relationships serve as the primary means for understanding the flow of power within a state. This also affects how we look to the adoption of a term, or ideograph, within a discourse. It is one thing to identify that a term has a patterned usage and meaning based on the needs or ambitions of the political power structure. It is another to identify that the term itself has been taken up in the rhetorical decisions of the populous affected by the use of the term. As McGee writes, “Marx was concerned with ‘power,’ with the capacity of the elite class to control the state’s political, economic, and military establishment, to dominate the state’s information systems and determine the consciousness of large masses of people.”³¹ Thus there is a motivation or a reason for a certain ideograph according to McGee. By this, what is at stake for McGee is not the term itself but who is naming the term. This is exactly what we have taken from Foucault earlier, in that every choice to define is an act of power. Consequently, to take the ideograph seriously in this project is to argue that the deployment of the term “food desert” within the philanthropic community is the result of an act or will to power.

The other key contribution from McGee to the theory of a tactical rhetoric is the notion that all communication is the intersection of fragmented other discourses. As he

³¹ *ibid* 453

argues, "...as a fragment in the critic's text, the speech is only a featured part of an arrangement that includes all facts, events, texts, and stylized expressions deemed useful in explaining its influence and exposing its meaning."³² McGee is here referring to the "I Have a Dream" speech given by Martin Luther King on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. McGee identifies that the story of an experience is a question of choice of what was "important" or "meaningful" within a moment due to the needs or interests of the storyteller. The story is always a fragment which is built of fragments. As a result, the power of the ideograph is both the normative conception of what is asked by a discourse and also what narratives are connected or deployed in the motivation of that term.

The idea of a narrative is critical to a tactical rhetoric in that the use of a term creates the connection between an audience and a story. To use the term "equity" from McGee's project as an example, the Foucaultian state is maintained when the subjects within the state share a common understanding of equity. This means the subject uses the term to describe the state in which they live. This allows the term to be deployed as a logic of control, in that the term is used to foster the negotiation between the subject and the state. The term signifying equity is then attached to a story -- a story that explains why the state is equitable. When the subject hears the term, their story of equity is shared in so far as the normative prospectus is shared by the state. The experience is represented within the sign (the name of the name,) and therefore posits the use of the rhetorical

³² Lucaites, John Louis., Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill. *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*. New York: Guilford Press, 1999. 71

nomination of the connection between the sign and the experience within the logic of the state's control.

The Act of Narration and the Affect of the Sign

To think of the nomination of a sign is also to identify that narrative tied to that sign is never separate from the act of narration of the sign. By this, I mean that the term does not exist rhetorically without being nominated or said into the context. This is the "narration of the sign." Rhetorical critic Walter Fischer defines narration as "a theory of symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them."³³ As a result, the process of telling a story is an active interpretation of the sequence as the teller of the story. The agent telling the story is an active creator of the story in that the story assumes a slightly different form based on the difference of relationships with the process of the telling of the story. The telling of a story is an act of power, in that the use of power as we have taken from Foucault is always productive. Fisher adds by arguing that each narrative, or act of narration, is the production of an argument. Communication cannot be separated from "inference and/or implication."³⁴ The narrator thus proposes a meaning. And yet, as we have seen in this thesis, the perceived meaning may not align with the intended meaning. The community

³³ Fischer, Walter R. "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument." In *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, by John Louis. Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill, 265-87. New York: Guilford Press, 1999. 265

³⁴ *ibid* 267

socializes a perspective, and in so doing creates both a local and also collective understanding of the story.

Fischer's work focuses on the production of what he refers to as the "narrative paradigm" for rhetorical criticism. This discussion argues that instead of learning about the world around us through applying reason and rationality we choose from different stories that form the foundation, or the lens, by which we view the world around us.³⁵ We move from a story, but use these stories based on how we learn and how we interact with distinct narratives. As he writes, "from the narrative view, each of these concepts translates into dramatic stories constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them."³⁶ Thinking in terms of this understanding of meaning making, we can argue that the "food desert" narrative is one of a multiplicity of narratives produced by our interaction with social issues. Our choice of engagement with these narratives functions as a means by which to perceive the injustice through the lens of the narration.

The narrative paradigm is Fischer's response to what he refers to as the "rational world paradigm."³⁷ For Fischer, this is that "the world is a set of logical puzzles that are resolved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct."³⁸ In other words, rather than using stories to make sense of the world around herself, the agent can use the human ability to think (to logic) through a

³⁵ *ibid* 271

³⁶ *ibid* 268

³⁷ *ibid* 268

³⁸ *ibid* 268

problem to decipher what is meant within a context. The agent can prove what is meant by applying a series of rules, algorithms, or processes to define.

The narrative paradigm views what is considered valued or Truth in each context as a reaction to or relationship with the stories held by the agent. Any yet, this does not mean that the narrative paradigm has no telos. Rather it understands that the telos is interconnected with the process of narration as opposed to a product of the outcome. As Fischer writes, "the sort of hierarchy condemned by the narrative praxis is the sort that is marked by the will to power, the kind of system in which elites struggle to dominate and to use the people for their ends or that makes the people blind subjects of technology."³⁹ The ethos of a narrative framing of social issues in one which values the fidelity of the narrative to the site of the experience. By this, I mean that we need to identify a hierarchy that is not dominated by the selected, but rather, by those who experience social issues. Those who are the ones who are sites of the emergence ought to be the ones who evaluate what that story means, feels like, and is understood as. Our telos is then a question of "narrative fidelity."

Fischer identifies narrative fidelity as "whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be truth in their lives."⁴⁰ What Fischer is referring to in this case is that to understand what we perceive to be true as a function of narratives, we use stories to judge the validity of other stories. Thus, did that story seem to be real or true based on stories that we know to be true? Referring to McGee and Foucault, the

³⁹ ibid 269

⁴⁰ ibid 272

stories we know to be true are themselves a product of the state's interest in maintaining the relationship of power within a context. A story that we may know to be true is one justifying capitalism or a form of oppression to maintain the other which is needed to keep the power relations intact.

Even in a less formal sense, and as a means of connecting this conversation about tactical rhetoric back to philanthropy, this does not even need to take on the sinister inclination of state power. By this I mean that philanthropy seems to fall into a different category than the vanguard who exists behind the screen placing value on the subjects over which the so-called consciousness rules. Instead philanthropy, while connected with the state's liberalism, is not the center of the formation of the state. It is, therefore, important to identify that this thesis focuses on the role of philanthropy as opposed to the State in general. Not to deny that there is a connection, but this connection is not central to the question of this thesis.

The question that the authors of this section ask is: what role do normative power structures that are in place affecting the flow of a narrative. All the more, what are the implications of adopting this story? Thus what is the state of philanthropy and how/why does the dominant narrative frame what flows of movement and narrative are supported/rejected by the state? How does the power of the foundation to determine what programs are funded, maintained, or eliminated affect their ability to define community issues? Who then gets to name the experience and posit the sign? The affected or the effected?

Moving into the core of this thesis, we can look to apply this conversation in a few ways by asking a few framing questions. First, does the paradigm of "impact" function ideographically, and if so what narratives does it privilege? Secondly, how does the story of "impact" help frame power relationships within and outside of philanthropy? Finally, how does the story of the food desert as an example of influence affect the relationship with the affected community based on the philanthropic process? By answering these three questions, this project seeks to identify the tactical rhetoric of philanthropy to determine a means by which to challenge the state of philanthropy.

CHAPTER TWO

The Paradigm of Impact Philanthropy

What is Collective Impact?

Philanthropic organizations and networks have long sought to evaluate what role their work plays within the communities they fund. Often successful businessmen and women use the same terminology, focus, and value criterion when evaluating the effectiveness of community investment. This means that while we cannot use the terms "profit" to analyze the efficiency of a donation this mindset still looks to judge what is called the "impact", or "return on" the investment. At present, the notion of "impact" is perhaps most notably connected with the theory of "collective impact". This engagement framework was introduced by John Kania and Mark Kramer in their 2001 piece "Collective Impact."⁴¹ Their argument was that social issues are complex and often reach beyond the scope of existing models and programs to combat them.

Kania and Kramer refer to existing efforts as "isolated" impact or program that will only address a portion of the issue as it exists. Take our issue of food access. The

⁴¹ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact (SSIR)." *Collective Impact*. Winter 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

obvious solution to aid families would be to plant vegetables, or to provide directly communities with free, healthy food. This makes some impact but does not change the underlying causes of the issue itself. Supplying vegetables will not offer the entirety of a family's food income or fix the problem of, for example, polluted soil. In other words, the issue of food access also has to do with income, class race, education, health, and a variety of other concerns that make up an inexhaustible list.

Kania and Kramer's proposal is that we need to adopt a networked approach to social issues which brings many voices to the table, representing a variety of perspectives. This means that our food access coalition includes farmers, teachers, policy makers, community voices, religious leaders, and every other possible perspective that could provide a different understanding of impact. Together the group can make a collective impact on the issue of food access.

Taking examples of this work the authors identified five core principles that made collective impact possible:

Our research shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organization."⁴²

A "common agenda" for Kania and Kramer is akin to an elevating goal or central thesis that connects or defines the work of the community organization. Take for example a food access organization. The common agenda may be to increase access to fresh

⁴² Ibid

produce within a community or on a neighborhood block. A common agenda does not refer to the individual project, but rather the connection or shared action by the collective impact initiative. We could even say that the common agenda is a shared definition of what success looks like for an organization. It is prescriptive in that it contains all the words that connect the group, and normative in that it tells the network what/how the mission is.

A "shared measurement system" signifies the common use of agreed upon standards or points for data collection.⁴³ What Kania and Kramer emphasize the collective impact approach is that not only must there be a common vision of the goal, but also a shared means by which to evaluate different projects across disciplines. Take for example the difference in the ways that organization operate right now. Some food access groups plant and harvest food. Others teach. Some bike food from a grocery store. All of these are aspects of a collective approach to impact, but yet each group has a different metric of success within the global context of the initiative's success. A shared measurement is a standard metric that can be applied to a variety of organizations. In this way, all of the different organizations engaged in food access work would use the same metric, even with various projects, to evaluate the success of their work in concert and alone.

"Reinforcing activities" highlights the need to coordinate the network's activities so that they do not overlap to the point that effectiveness is lost. This means that

⁴³ *ibid*

networks must also practice "continuous communication" which means that nodes in a network are actively sharing information, data, lessons, and leads. The largest shift in collective impact is perhaps not even in the practices but rather this perspective that the network supersedes the organization. The need to share means that together the group succeeds and that work compliments the other.

This is all possible due to the "backbone" or the central leadership team that works to facilitate the communication between nodes, to share data and insights. The backbone is that group of actors which keeps the network rigid or together, but all the while works to help it adapt and move. Thus, the network is not "run" by the backbone but could not run without it either. The backbone is commonly affiliated with the funder of the collective impact initiative and, therefore, works to communicate externally to the network as well as internally.

What each element of collective impact identifies is the need for effective to have agreed or shared understandings of a process, decision-making, actions, and outcomes. Together these make-up the notion of "impact", or the attempt to name a shared understanding of how to measure success. Jointly what each of the elements is proposing, under the notion of a collective action, is the framework for a collective result. Thus not only do we need to name the process together, but also the outcome. Not just the vision of success, but how we measure what success looks like. The backbone serves to house these conceptions and make sure that projects are aligned with the core agreements and values.

Therefore, the shift of the isolated to the collective process is a result of a paradigm shift within how we evaluate organizational success. Take this passage from "Collective Impact":

Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee's individual influence from all other variable".⁴⁴

Kania and Kramer are arguing that much like we cannot look to the isolated impact we also must not look to isolated credit. To think of collective impact is to think about a move to the network. Thus, the network speaks as a one.

The Collective Impact framework has been very well received and widely implemented with philanthropic and community engagement organizations. New coalitions of multi-disciplinary collaboratives have emerged to use new collective impact earmarked grant dollars, and to reform existing projects. Even Kania and Kramer remark that collective impact projects take a generation to be evaluated, which means that we are still too close to identify if this change works or is working. What we can say is that the notion of "impact" has become a major term within philanthropic research and, in fact, has become a primary gatekeeping definition for access to resources and political action through foundations and organizations.

Take for example a yearly article published by the Chronicle of Philanthropy naming the top ten buzzwords of the incoming year. Number two for 2012 was "collective impact" of which the author wrote,

⁴⁴ ibid

This term shows the power of a good buzzword to compel an idea. There's nothing new about government, nonprofits, the public, and commercial businesses working together. But the phrase "collective impact," coined by the prominent philanthropy advisers Mark Kramer and John Kania, helped focus attention and raise the idea to prominence again.⁴⁵

Not only is the term a part of a longer tradition, but the term itself is a new attempt to name this process. The name is therefore what is different as opposed to the definition. While Kania and Kramer's definition may not be exactly what it is being compared to, what we can say is the term is a product of a context within philanthropy that is primed to its functional meaning. The conversation reinforces a previous discussion that while full of energy has laid dormant.

What also is essential to understanding the interest in collective impact is the authors focus on the use of data. In their piece "Collective Impact," Kania and Kramer define "collective impact" as, "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem."⁴⁶ For the authors what binds the network into a collective agent is the most important factor; the use of a shared language.

As they state in the article "Channeling Change,

“Having a small but comprehensive set of indicators establishes a common language that supports the action framework, measures progress along the common agenda, enables greater alignment among the goals of different organizations, encourages more collaborative problem-solving, and becomes the

⁴⁵ "Philanthropy Buzzwords of 2011." The Chronicle of Philanthropy. December 27, 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. <https://philanthropy.com/article/Philanthropy-Buzzwords-of-2011/157395>.

⁴⁶ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact (SSIR)." Collective Impact. Winter 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

platform for an ongoing learning community that gradually increases the effectiveness of all participants.”⁴⁷

In other words, what collective impact calls for is a shared language across diverse sectors of engagement that provide for the adoption of a shared understanding of a social problem by varied perspectives. Kania and Kramer argue for ideographs within collective impact initiatives, to the extent that the term is shared by the collective. If the ideology of the network can be understood as its vision or guiding principles the membership within the network necessitates a mutual relationship with the beliefs. The shared beliefs are needed for a shared language and the ability to communicate regarding reinforcing activities.

The Data Paradigm of Collective Impact

Regarding the communication within and by the network, we need to think of shared language as more than just words but also regarding the data that is collected and shared by the nodes. At the core of collective impact is a movement towards using more data to guide engagement and social good projects. The idea of shared data platforms is as an essential component of collective impact through the proposed definition, and, in addition, is the theoretical framing of this paper. Before moving deeper into the idea of

⁴⁷ Hanleybrown, Fay, Mark Kania, and John Kramer. "Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work." Stanford Social Innovation Review. January 6, 2012. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work.

"collective "impact" I wish to offer a brief overview of what shared data measurement means and what benefits it potentially offers to participating institutions.

In their publication "Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact," Kramer, Parkhurst, and Vaidyanathan refer to three distinct changes in the capability for shared data collection and usage within the community.⁴⁸ The first is shared data platforms. By this Kramer et al., refer to the ability for tools to be used by different organizations in varied ways allowing for specialization about particular needs within the community. This means that a food access network would be able to use the same tool(s) as a gang-prevention organization but would be able to collect data along different variables. This is not to say that the issues are distinct, but instead to identify that the process of collecting data through the use of web-based collection software makes is easier for both agencies to determine of what data they are most in need. Kramer et al. also identify that many of these programs, through their shared usage across varied sectors, decrease the cost associated with data collection and shared platforms making technical support more efficient and affordable.⁴⁹

The second shift in data collection is referred to as comparative performance systems or the ability for varied organizations to compare data collected along the same categories.⁵⁰ The use of identical definitions allows for the easy transfer of data outside

⁴⁸ Kramer, Mark, Marcie Parkhurst, and Lalita Vaidyanathan. "Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact." *FSG Social Impact Advisors*, 2009. http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/files/Breakthroughs_in_Shared_Measurement_complete.pdf.

⁴⁹ *ibid* 4

⁵⁰ *ibid* 5

an organization that would allow for others involved in similar projects to compare their results. At the same time, this opens the potential to learn from other projects on how to improve the work of separate organizations. In this way, the ability to not only share data about a community but also to use the same platforms for their investigation and evaluation identifies an overlapping perception of the designated community.

The third and final shift defined by Kramer et al. is referred to as adaptive learning systems. These represent the ability for organizations to not only share data but also to share results of programs.⁵¹ By this, the authors refer to the fact that shared data is only beneficial when what an organization collects is useful to other organizations and projects. In the application of shared visions about social issues, the benefits or failures of one organization can be spread in the same way as shared data, through identical metrics for evaluating success and failure. In this way organization A's lessons are learned by organization B, which both provides a collaborative problem-solving platform for dealing with the issues faced by A, but also makes it more likely that B will not face these questions or will be prepared when they emerge from the process.

According to Kramer et al., the use of shared data measurement offers three distinct benefits to community engagement organizations.⁵² The first is what already has been referred to as cost saving. The article cites the program Shared Measurements as an example of a data platform while costs \$10,000 for one user annually. When shared that

⁵¹ *ibid* 6

⁵² *ibid* 17

cost can be lowered to \$2,500 for a collaborative of four.⁵³ In this way, the operational costs of the program can be shared by varied agencies who all gain in different ways from a common data platform.

The second is improved data quality and credibility, or the idea that increased access to data regarding community engagement both enhances the understanding of an issue but also the ability for relevant agents to speak about the social problem. When organizations have evidence to back up their claims and funding requests they can speak with more authority both to potential funders and other policymakers. The third and final benefit to shared data collection and measurement is the ability to identify quickly if programs and engagement strategies are being active about their stated goals.⁵⁴ By this, the authors refer to the ability to compare similar programs addressing similar issues through their participation in a shared data platform.

The emergence of collective impact from or in concert with the paradigm of data-driven initiatives is made possible by the idea of the backbone organization. While the backbone has already been defined, it is essential to connect this with the formal use of backbone through the prioritization of data. As Kania and Kramer write,

The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.⁵⁵

⁵³ *ibid* 12

⁵⁴ *ibid* 14

⁵⁵ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact (SSIR)." *Collective Impact*. Winter 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

The backbone is therefore both the facilitator of the process of social engagement, but at the same time houses the technical and specialized skills necessary to protect the process. The backbone staff uses data by transferring data shared by all members of the network.

As Turner, Merchant, Kania, and Martin state, "a common theory of change for backbone organizations that ultimately seeks to improve social outcomes by organizing cross-sector groups of partners to transform an often inefficient, fragmented system."⁵⁶

In this way, one flaw of the non-collective model of engagement is that it relies on a fragmented understanding of the social problem, and in this way can also be said to employ varied logics of engagement or framing of a social issue. The benefits of the backbone organization serve to locate a logic that is then used to frame the relationships between a coalition and the engagement outside that coalition.

If we are to believe Kania et al.'s work on the expansion of shared data platforms, then it would seem that data serves as this shared understanding of a social issue. Data can be used to define a social issue, i.e., poverty is X. This identifies a shared image of poverty for the coalition in that it names the definition of poverty. Furthermore, this perspective serves to facilitate the use of a common language of poverty which can connect the varied organizations involved in the process of collective impact engagement.

⁵⁶ Turner, Shiloh, Kathy Merchant, John Kania, and Ellen Martin. "Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2 (SSIR)." *Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2*. July 18, 2012. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2.

The backbone is then the location of a shared language that unifies a logic of appearance for a social issue resulting in the shared understanding of both the direction of engagement, but also the justified processes to reach determined ends. Turner et al. identifies a clear example, "We found that this subject matter is complicated and tends to be very heavy on jargon, so the foundation will continue to make an effort to improve in its own communications."⁵⁷ The use of jargon identifies the language that the backbone agents themselves use to frame a social issue. This language itself is very technical, or a product of an exclusive language perspective that is foreign to the language employed by the other members of the coalition. The need to translate the terminology to the coalition identifies a practical role of the backbone as the translator of the vision into a thought thinkable by the other agents involved. This also supports the argument that data itself may be technical in nature but still allows for a shared perspective in its translation by the backbone to the rest of the coalition.

The rhetorical effect of the backbone's control over the language used by the coalition, when taken in concert with the emergence of the idea of data-defined social issues, identifies that the use of data as a catalyst for engagement frames the social problem through the worldview of data itself. In this way, the translation of terms to the community would also facilitate the conversion of data framing of social issues within the coalition. Collective engagement then operates as the effect of a shared language

⁵⁷ Turner, Shiloh, Kathy Merchant, John Kania, and Ellen Martin. "Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 4 (SSIR)." *Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 4*. July 18, 2012. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_4.

predicated on common data standards for evaluation. The emphasis on data-driven engagement strategies serves to isolate a generic understanding of a social issue, but at the same time locates a particular "correct" understanding of the problem. By "correct" I am referring to the act of engagement itself for if the coalition shares a common perspective then it is this understanding that is made the material in the coalition's actions towards a community. Deviance from this given definition would then result in negative implications for the uniform engagement plan. In this way the idea of a unified network understanding of a social issue is the production of a paradox; a universal framing of a problem regarding an overlapping knowledge, but at the same time the backbone serves to frame a singular logic of relationship to the issue.

While this project is not focused on solely on collective impact but rather food access, this understanding of existing framing narratives is essential to identifying the platforms by which we talk about food access. Food access serves as one of the areas to which collective impact organizations can push their shared data to make an impact. What we can say at this point is that the context of philanthropy is one which is beneficial to the reception of the narrative of "impact," or a collective response to a social issue or engagement policy. While this on its own should seem fairly obvious what this return to the notion named as impact offers is a unique connection to our discussion over the meaning of the terminology of the "food desert." The space is named regarding the data we can collect and thus what impact we can prove.

What is also telling concerning the spread of data-driven initiatives, and the need to focus on their implication for community engagement, is the adoption of the terminology and focus on community organizing models. This identifies now only the spread of a term or framework but also a practice. Take for example Teixeira and Wallace's recently published piece "Data-Driven Organizing: A Community-University Partnership to Address Vacant and Abandoned Property". In the paper the authors identify what they refer to as data-driven organizing (DDO), or in their words "a reciprocal process in which researchers and communities work together to identify problems; to collect, analyze, and report data relevant to those problems; and to identify and implement solutions to alleviate them."⁵⁸ Regarding DDO, it should be noted that data is not only a means of engagement but also the functional origin of the engagement plan as a whole.

In their case study of the Homewood neighborhood Teixeira and Wallace highlight that one essential component of DDO is that it aims "to mobilize residents to address the problem of vacant properties in an economically disadvantaged African American neighborhood." In this way, DDO identifies a social issue through this study, and the results of this process are used as a catalyst for praxis by community residents. The practical starting point for the program was the mobilization of a data-collection team within the community that engaged residents in a series of interviews.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Teixeira, Samantha, and John M. Wallace. "Data-Driven Organizing: A Community-University Partnership to Address Vacant and Abandoned Property." *Journal of Community Practice* 21.3 (2013): 248-62. Print. 5

⁵⁹ Ibid

The DDO example from Homewood clearly uses data to define the problem of vacant lots both in its identification but also in the measurement of the need. According to Operation Better Block's (the organizing initiative located in Homewood) report, 28% of residential properties in Homewood were vacant, and 44% of the land parcels were vacant.⁶⁰ This characterization of the problem in the language of data is then also used to offer proof of the social problem. By this, I mean that if we are to use data to mobilize the community's response it is the data that serves as the motivator. The data defines the need for the community as opposed to the community motivating engagement on its own. Data is then the source of the identification of a social problem in that the community residents work with organizers to identify what social issues are affecting the community through the process of data collection.

Impact as Ideographic

A focus on impact as the result of engagement identifies why we can look to the wider paradigm of an "impact based philanthropy". The project is funded, supported, or rejected based on the return on investment from the grant that can be readily understood in direct relation to the funder. Thus, one needs to prove that they will create change and therefore that the project is a good investment. This change has been labeled "impact" and thus pushes the change agent towards a paradigm of prediction and definition that is

⁶⁰ ibid 9

not necessarily tied to the process of change itself. By this, I mean that impact becomes a product of a definition that may itself not be "accurate" in its attempt to represent the situation. In fact, thus far we have argued that often the pattern works the other way. And so, the ways that we define issues shape how we look at those issues.

The notion of impact is ideographic in that it both is a commonplace term used within the philanthropic industry but also that it proposes or identifies a normative vision of how philanthropy as a whole ought to act. The first point has been identified both in the public usage of the term but the wide ranges of uses that "impact" has been applied as a product of the literature regarding collective impact. Taking this even further within Denver specifically we can identify that the term impact has taken on a wide audience when the Denver Foundation's newest slogan is "Maximizing Impact."⁶¹ While one example does not mean that the term is commonplace, when one looks at the fact that The Denver Foundation is the largest Foundation in Denver in terms of not only philanthropic output but also in terms of number of funders/fundees, we can see that the term is being used to influence a wide range of actors and subject. To put this another way, the Denver Foundation has deployed the term "impact" as a means of both connecting with philanthropic activities and has also adopted the term to frame its own discourse around its commitments.

⁶¹ "Powering Generosity, Maximizing Impact." Denver Foundation Home. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.denverfoundation.org/>.

As for the normative vision of "impact," we can look to a few key passages from the literature on collective impact. In the article "Collective Impact" Kania and Kramer state,

"Evidence of the effectiveness of this approach is still limited, but these examples suggest that substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact."⁶²

This passage identifies that while there is no literature to support necessarily that this paradigm is more effective, the authors still identify that we can make progress regarding social issues if we adopt the paradigm. Thus, the ill-defined normative vision of impact is one which creates a call to action prior to the "proof" of impact, or in another way the impact of the impact paradigm.

Continuing in the same article,

"Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee's individual influence from all other variables."⁶³

This passage is key in that while the authors are just now proposing the theory they posit that the notion of impact is already being used to evaluate the success of philanthropy.

Therefore normatively the adoption of impact is tied to the existing practices or philanthropy even without the term being used actively. The authors are

⁶² Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact (SSIR)." *Collective Impact*. Winter 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

⁶³ *ibid*

"territorializing," (to use Deleuze's language) by back-forming the existence of a narrative to justify the current emerge of their own literature within the field.

The move rhetorically is to argue that the practice exists prior to its name. Referring back to Foucault here there is an intersecting connection with the practice vs. the name of "homosexuality." The homosexual act exists prior to the name, but in another way does not exist as a "homosexual act" without the name, the sign, of the act being thinkable. Thus can we say that impact exists prior to the name? Perhaps. It is another thing to argue that the idea of impact, as a product of a collective process of relationships such as collective impact, can be thought prior to the framework itself.

This is how the authors justify the normative notion of impact; it is already happening, or it is inevitable. Is this not the same practice that would be taken by a defender of capitalism when she argues that we have always been capitalistic? To read an act is different from the notion of motivating an act based on the name. This is not to say that philanthropists were not evaluating what the effect of a policy was prior to this literature, but again, it is another to argue that they were positing the same notion of impact.

The Power Relations of Impact

The second question that this section identified is how does the narrative of "impact" help frame power relationships within and outside of philanthropy? In terms of collective impact, the notion of power arrangements between the funder and the fundee is very much tied to the evaluation of the agent's effectiveness with received funds. To understand this connection we turn to Kania and Kramer's focus on special interests as a foil to collective impact.

In their article "Embracing Emergence" the authors write, "As our political system increasingly responds to isolated special interests, the power of collective impact to give political voice to the needs of a community is one of its most important dimensions."⁶⁴ A collective political impact is then separate from self-interest in the sense of the current political model when agents act on their own behalf. A collective approach motivates a shared understanding of action and thus offers a break from partisanship. This is where the ill-defined normative vision is also critical for this framing posits that a collective approach is perhaps not separate from self-interest, but rather is not solely framed by.

This fails to recognize the self-interest of philanthropists to support their grant, or for non-profits to keep the lights on, to pay salaries. Or to put this another way, the notion of an isolated impact as a paradigm or reaction to the real world consequences of

⁶⁴ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity (SSIR)." *Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity*. January 21, 2013. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/embracing_emergence_how_collective_impact_addresses_complexity.

philanthropy do not disappear when the term used to the name the relationship shifts. Thus, there is always an inherent self-interest even within collective impact. The term "community" is also critical to this passage. The charge is that by changing how we evaluate the changes within a community we can better give voice to the political needs of the community. The authors do not explain why this is the case but instead argue that the more voices we bring to the table the more complex we can be in our relationships with affected communities.

Instead what we learn in other passages from the literature is that collective impact is a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the members of a collective impact network as opposed to evaluating the role that community voices plays in the process. They state, "Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee's individual influence from all other variables."⁶⁵ The first connection that can be made is in the first sentence where "impact" is identified in relation to influence. In this way, the ability to influence the social problem is itself a form of impact or the fact that the movement of an issue is in some way having an impact on it.

This connection with evaluation continues into the second piece on collective impact which states,

⁶⁵ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact (SSIR)." *Collective Impact*. Winter 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

Competing priorities among stakeholders and fears about being judged as underperforming make it very hard to agree on common measures. Organizations have few resources with which to measure their own performance, let alone develop and maintain a shared measurement system among multiple organizations.⁶⁶

In this passage, we are reminded of the competing interpretations of social issues that conflict the relationship between organizations with the space of engagement. The problem of failed evaluation, in this passage at least, is the recognition that blame may be passed along to participants where it is not warranted. This supports the analysis from a few pages back which proposed that the shift between "isolated" and "collective" approaches ought to be thought of in terms of their ability to be evaluated.

In this way, the authors highlight both a need to shift means of evaluation, but at the same time create a platform where effective programs can be shared throughout systems. Impact then takes on the theme of replication, or that once a clear path to identify an impact has been reached this can then be reproduced in other contexts by other agents. In much the same way that collective impact itself is a reproducible form, so too are specific applications of the collective impact framework. Is this not why data is so valuable? I can learn more the mistakes/successes of others, and thus make my own work impactful. The idea of impact is then an act to territorialize with effective impact processes.

This move to impact as evaluation continues in the third and final piece "Embracing Emergence". In this case "impact" comes to stand not just for the ability to

⁶⁶ Hanleybrown, Fay, Mark Kania, and John Kramer. "Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work." Stanford Social Innovation Review. January 6, 2012. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work.

evaluate in relation to the group as opposed to the individual contribution, but also ought to be understood as the ability to be evaluated. This is apparent in the following two passages:

The solutions we have come to expect in the social sector often involve discrete programs that address a social problem through a carefully worked out theory of change, relying on incremental resources from funders, and ideally supported by an evaluation that attributes to the program the impact achieved. Once proven, these solutions can scale up by spreading to other organizations.⁶⁷

And: "In part, this is due to the expectations of funders and legislators who understandably want to know what their money will buy and predict how the discrete projects they fund will lead to the impacts they seek."⁶⁸

Thus the normative vision is one of giving voice to political communities, but in practice is more tied to the funder getting a return on their investment. The connection between legislators and funders is critical in that from previous passages we learn the collective impact is separate from political partisanship and self-interest, but rather a self-interest is moved up the ladder. Thus, there is nothing inherent in the new framing of the issue that gives light to the increase ability to give voice to communities. Instead, the role of the voice is to maintain the effectiveness of the donation in relationship to the notion of impact. Impact is used to prove the investment is paying off based on the static point to which the result is compared. This is impact: moving the needle.

⁶⁷ Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity (SSIR)." *Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity*. January 21, 2013. Accessed November 15, 2015.

⁶⁸ *ibid*

To conclude this chapter we can identify that the idea of impact is ideographic in that it proposes a normative relationship between the funder, fundee, and community in a way that seeks to better identify the relationship between the first two through the third. This is inseparable from the collection of data as this is the only way that someone external to the process of engagement can evaluate the success. A focus on impact allows the funder to never communicate or experience the engagement process but still use a metric to identify or evaluate the investment.

The next chapter will identify the impact of such a framing of impact, in that such an inherent disconnect in the process has consequences that ultimately move the community both out of the equation but, in fact, allows for the impact to also be separate from the community. Moving to the idea of the "food desert" as an example of impact chapter three will identify that by turning the Badiou/Lazarus understanding of the name of the name we can look to the replacement of community experience with the definition of impact. This replacement allows philanthropists to prove impact without eliminating the social issue.

CHAPTER THREE

The Food Desert as Impact

While instances of food insecurity are not uncommon, or novel, the terminology of "food desert" is. A relatively recent term when compared to other political discourse used to talk about inadequate food access the term, while common in American social literature, was originally used in Scotland. The term itself was reportedly first used by a resident of a public housing project in the early 1990s in Scotland. In 1995, the term "food desert" appears for the first time in an official document when it is published by the Scottish government's Low-Income Project Team working as a part of the Nutrition Task Force. During a speech in 1998 Sir Donald Acheson, the chairman of the International Centre for Health and Society at University College, used the term in a speech launching the publication of the government's "Independent Inquiry in Health."

Acheson's speech was a key moment in the discourse of the "food desert" as this is the first public usage of the term by a governmental official. As Acheson stated, "'a paradox that a healthy basket of food has been found to cost more in disadvantaged areas than in affluent areas . . . [This] has led to the creation of 'food deserts.'"⁶⁹ Through

⁶⁹ Cummins, Steven, and Sally Macintyre. "Food Deserts"—evidence and Assumption in Health Policy Making." *London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*: 436-38. <http://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/491619/1/436.full.pdf>.

coverage of Acheson's speech the term arrived in the sphere of the national media machine, ultimately spreading internationally to where is commonly used in governmental and philanthropic reports.

These early uses of the term were primarily focused on the placement of grocery stores within urban built environments. The Nutrition Task Force, for example, was one of the first to document or map the location of stores selling produce to residential areas. This is important in that as we will see the contemporary uses of the term do not differ much from the original function. Acheson's speech is also key in that it set the precedent for what data was connected to the idea of the food desert, or to put this in another way, what measurements were used to identify the existence of a food desert. His choice to use papers published by Mooney, Piachaudetal, and Sooman et al. in his presentation made these the primary sources of the food desert project. The papers and their authors' arguments became the foundation for what would be a growing interest in academia regarding the sites of food access.⁷⁰

What is interesting about these papers use within the government's speeches is that they do not even agree among themselves about what food access looks like. First, Mooney's paper argues that the price of health food is higher when compared to less nutritious food both in affluent and non-affluent urban neighborhoods. This means that

⁷⁰ Ibid

there is no space that is deprived of geographical food access in that the access is more expensive in all urban spaces.⁷¹

Mooney's conclusion is not that food access is tied to geography but rather to price. Piachadudetal's paper does not even look to the price of food based on its market value but instead argues that the price of food is negatively correlated with the size of the store that is selling the produce. Thus the larger the store, the cheaper the food. *ibid*

This means that food access is not only geographic or price based, but rather is connected with supply chains, sites of consumption, and the urban built environment. Finally, Sooman et al. argue found that, "healthy food costs more in a poorer area than in a more affluent area and that the relative difference in cost between healthy food and unhealthy food was smaller in the more affluent area."⁷² As a consequence, not only are the poor paying a higher percentage of their income for food, the gap between healthy and unhealthy food is much higher. Therefore, someone who lives in poverty will pay more for healthy food both in terms of physical access but also the market value of the food.

The main studies used to support the first introduction of the term "food desert" not only do not share a common understanding of access but also offer different observations regarding the relationship between space and food access. Each provides a different lens used to identify why and how we can look to understand food insecurity. However what can be said regarding these first entries into the conversation regarding the

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² *ibid* 2

"food desert" is that the core measurements proposed still drive today's research. The term can be seen in its evolution to the point that all we know of its origin is a brief narrative of an unnamed women living in subsidized housing. But this observation of the origin of the term shares a recognition that the understanding of the term is different that its site of origin. The fact that we can look to three different interpretations that are constrained within the policy statement recognizes that the origin of the term is not its current usage. Even more the term does not have a locked in meaning based on the first usage, but rather, like all other terms its definition changes based on who is using and what point they are trying to make.

Now this is not novel for other terminologies either. Words change their functional meaning based on the contexts within which they are used. Take the notion of "homosexual" or "gay". The term itself is used very differently or has different functional meaning based on the year or epoch it was used in for example. Accordingly what is key is not necessarily the term itself, but rather the interaction the context has with the name itself. As Schiappa writes, "Because definitions affirm or deny specific interests and encourage particular linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors the choice of definitions is always normative and prescriptive."⁷³ Thus, the deployment of a term always has a context both in terms of its motivation but also is use. The name is given to the event as it occurs, but also itself it located within a contextualized networks of meaning and usages.

⁷³ Schiappa, Edward. *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003. 68

Take for example Acheson's choices to cite the three authors in the speech. These studies were chosen not only based on what they said but also the authenticity of the scholar, the point being made, the creditability of the publishing institution, etc. What this means is that there is not a meaning attached to the term that cannot be detached. Even the first usage of the term is not the authentic usage the term is given meaning based on the contexts that take into account its utterance. The context of power, the role of the government, the meaning of the government, what is the State, what is the Scottish state, what is food, all of these are questions whose answer in some sense influences the functioning of the term "food desert". There is no "authentic" definition or meaning of the term as it appears because we are always disconnected from the entirety of a context. It would not be a stretch to guess that every Senator who has voted on "food desert" legislation does not know where the term comes from, but they can still deploy its meaning because of context.

The Name "Food Desert"

Consequently, we can recognize two elements of the "function of the name," here called a definition. First, there is no static, functional definition. Each definition is tied to a context. The name of the name is the placeholder within a context, and while it may emerge within other states, the meaning is applied based on the existing state of its deployment. While definitions are themselves static, their application or deployment

occurs within an intersection of contexts and actions. Thus the definition itself does not change, but the use of, or action of, the definition will.

Secondly, names are placeholders for a functional definition. By this, I mean that the form does not relate to the matter. The name "food desert" does not reflect, or mimic the experience, but rather is a signification of the experience. The definition is a prescription of the being there. The name is the symbol given to a pattern of occurrences. Our reason for having different interpretations of "food access" by the three authors chosen by Acheson is a product of the fact that each of their research was different from the other. The context of the research was different, the people they talked about their findings with over a pint, the observations hidden in the notes, the inspiration out the window of the rain, and every other possibility imaginable. Both the things being studied were distinct and thus formed with their own consciousness, based on the unique contexts within which the experience occurred. Therefore each is a "true" account of access, but we must recognize that each is a slice of an interrelated context.

While we cannot know what Acheson's motivation was for deploying this term, when we recognize that there is a function of the name that is not correlated necessarily with the name we are given the opportunity for some broad observations. Take for example the idea of a "desert." There are not many deserts in Scotland, or at least deserts that are the focus on traditional narratives. The desert is a rolling plane made of sand, blowing with the wind as the dunes move and grow. The desert is a barren place, there is no life except for the hero is journeying access in our story. A desert is a metaphor of

death, or perhaps more aptly, a lack of life. The choice to use this term raises such an image in the mind of the agent who is connecting with the term. Again, there is no connection between the name and the name of the name, but the name of the name is connected with other narratives that themselves are the products of our experiences in relation to other deployments.

To think of this use of the desert narrative as tactical is to argue that Acheson and others who have used the term wish to connect that perception of lack of life with an image of the lack of food access. Food access is the equivalent to life and thus even within the movement of the desert, the neighborhood's economics, there is a lack of that which is desirable. Even further, it is key to recognize that the term is being used to connect with individuals who do not live without food access. In other words, those who experience what is called a "food desert" do not "need" a means or a term to imagine metaphorically what a lack of food might look like. This is instead called the norm or the regular access to food within a community.

To position the namer as the de-facto creator of meaning based on the agency of the identification of the object hints at a broader conversation about power. First the namer is naming that which is foreign to an audience, but also names the first relationship between the agent and a perception of a lack of food access. The namer decides how the first image of a lack is thought in the mind of the new audience member. As Schiapa writes, "Power to define is power to influence behavior. All proposed definitions are devised for specific purposes that can be evaluated according to the interests that they

advance.”⁷⁴ As a result, the ways that we name or define objects influence how we interact with them. If I name this a "chair" you might think to sit, but if I name what you call a "chair" a "table" your perception of the object changes. The name "chair" becomes attached with a meaning that does not make sense in relation to the perceived function of the object. The "table" still has the same capacity to hold you as you sit, but the name changes the ways that I look at the object.

Moving to a less trivial example can we not look to the classic debate of "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter." The name I give to an agent aligns a definition, but that definition is fluid based on the context. This functional definition of the direction of the violence changes how I view the conflict, the interaction, the soldier. If I am just learning about a conflict the name given to "sides" influences my immediate reaction to this story even though I may not have a direct connection. In fact, in the case of a lack of a direct connection the namer has even more power. There is no opportunity to create an independent understanding when the name of the name is posited as the name.

The role of definitions within social change process cannot be understated. This focus on the definition identifies an insight into what is the role of names such as "food desert" but also identifies the relationships of power that exist within the process of using a definition, or in fact, defining. This is why the example of "freedom fighter" is key, because even if we share the same name, definition, and/or context we still might disagree over the moral or ethical implications. The "freedom fighter" is not a shift in the

⁷⁴ ibid 88

action, but rather a shift in the resonance of the name of the name itself. The name cannot be separated from its audience, in that the audience is inseparable from the context. An audience, or community, acts of a resonance of the name when it moves them in a similar fashion. When there is an agreement on what names mean.

The context is a connection of the audience, held historical "facts", and political trajectories that together create the constancy of the movement of change. This is Foucault's thesis that power is productive: there is not halting of change, but rather a halting of a use of power.⁷⁵ The apparatus of the State system designates limits to production by making actions legal or visible. Or as Shiappa writes, "when it comes to defining our shared reality there is simply no escape from questions of power, interests, and historical contingency."⁷⁶ Movements with meaning attached to them enter a moment, and in this moment they connect with other movements entering the moment. The collision creates the need for definition. There needs to be a pattern. But what such accounts for is that to understand the definition we need to understand the process of why this pattern emerged. We have already looked to the history of the term "food desert", but not to the process that sees its impetus towards redeployment. In other words, what are the political powers that manifest the emergence of the term "food desert?"

⁷⁵ Rabinow, Paul, ed. *Power the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*. United States: NEW Press (NY), 2000. 211

⁷⁶ Schiappa, Edward. *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003. 105

The Food Desert as Ideographic

Returning to McGee, we can identify that much like "impact" the "food desert" operates ideographically. First, it represents a commonly used term to talk about or describe geographic areas without food access, but also that it creates a normative conception of how we ought "fix" food insecurity. Before we look to the definition, it is key to note that this piece attempts to argue for an ideograph within a technocratic community in that while I would argue that "food desert" is not a public term in McGee's sense it is a commonplace term within a discipline. So far I have named this discipline "philanthropy" or in a broader sense the apparatus which moves capital from funders to fundees motivated by social change or social justice. Therefore, this project looks to the term food desert as being ideographic within the philanthropic community. This community is broad enough on its own to circulate within the public, but also this sphere activity influences the public.

For that reason, the first definition we ought to look to is the United States Department of Agriculture. This is the case for a few reasons. First, the USDA is active in philanthropic efforts through millions of dollars in grants it offers each year. Secondly, the USDA's definition is regularly cited on publications as an authoritative source. Finally, even if this is not the source of the definition for other agents, the USDA has influence over agricultural and food policies that impact food security nationally. This means that how the USDA understands food deserts influences the support of other projects which enforces that belief.

The USDA defines a food desert as:

[U]rban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options.⁷⁷

From this definition, we can learn a few things about food deserts. First, a food desert is connected to the lack of access to food, or rather, if one has access to food from a grocery store they are not living in a food desert. Secondly, food access is understood as consumption or the commercial access to food. This is made clear by the use of the term "affordable" twice in the passage. Finally, we are given the bright line to food desertification in that lack of food is understood as no food access or some but not adequate. Once again we see the connection between the discourse of the original usage of the term and its contemporary, formal definition. Much like the first definitions the term focuses on the act or site of consumption as a measurable site of food insecurity. Thus, the grocery store is a fundamental aspect of the food desert definition.

We can see that this definition is used, but also expanded upon based on the observations of other organizations studying food access. Take this report published by the University of Denver about food access in the Denver metro area. They define food deserts as:

A food desert, as defined by the USDA, is a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low-access to a super-market or grocery store. (United States Department of Agriculture 2012)

⁷⁷ "Agricultural Marketing Service - Creating Access to Healthy, Affordable Food." Agricultural Marketing Service - Creating Access to Healthy, Affordable Food. Accessed November 15, 2015. <https://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/fooddeserts.aspx>.

Low –access means it is greater than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store in urban areas or more than 10 miles in rural areas.⁷⁸

Here we add that to be eligible for the name of "food desert" a community must have "low-income" status and live more than a certain mileage away from a site of commercial food access. What this means in terms of understanding the implications of the name "food desert" we can recognize that a common usage is also the indicator of a common understanding of what food access is, and ought to be. To argue that a "food desert" denies regular access to fresh produce and also to argue that food desert lacks access within a mile results in the proposition that access to food is, in part, a question of proximity to produce. Looking to different communities named as "food deserts" we can then begin to identify a common pattern that is being named regardless of the context.

The second element is the notion of "low-income", or recognition that communities without access to food also cannot afford the food. Why is this element key? Take a geographic story of most suburban centers and you will find that most qualify as food deserts but do not function. Why is this the case? Transportation is better in the suburbs meaning that distances can be eliminated easier. Wealth also introduces other ways to access food, such as having the time to find desired food products. Wealth can also lower the financial burden that must be paid for organic or top-shelf produce.

Therefore the functional definition of the "food desert" is the result of the identification of the common elements of urban and rural communities. This makes it

⁷⁸ Moyer, Dustin. *Denver Food Deserts and the Impact on Public Health!*, Spring 2013. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://www.du.edu/ahss/ipps/media/documents/moyer_policymemo.pdf.

easy to identify areas of need in that we need only the data from a census to identify functional areas of food need that can be prescribed due to a patterning of emergence. In fact, you can now go to the USDA's website and use a tool called the "Food Desert Locator" to find food deserts. A user is given the options to load different data sets representing different income brackets and distances to stores. The map allows the user to zoom in on any community to see if "their community is a food desert?" This interactivity creates the illusion for the user that food access is located within a census tract, or that in another way, the food desert is the result of the factors that can be measured. The equation adds income and distance to produce a definable object we call "food desert." This again is reinforced when the potential first conception of food access by the user is this maps locating them within a low-income community that meet other standards.

Therefore, the term has created a shared consciousness of the "food desert" which is separate from the experience of, as I am connected to the virtual understanding of the object as opposed to its actuality. In reality the term "food desert" is an inaccurate depiction of the issues that affect communities, and in fact, could be understood to have caused more harm than good regarding its role in the discourse of food access. Take for example that the notion of a food desert is a question of first geography, the distance that a household has to go to get to a grocery store, and then secondly regarding the cost of food within a community as compared to an income bracket. These can be identified in

the shared usage of the term from above. A focus on two question creates an understanding "of" by sorting through the collected data in the semi-annual census reports that are recorded by both states and the federal government. Data is quantified by census tract, and then the sites of grocery stores are plotted. A line is drawn from a community to the store, and then we compare the results to the income data for that community. The visuals are nothing more than a line of script that changes based on the algorithm that imports the annual data set.

This measurement formula is an arbitrary connection between the grocery store and the household for a few reason. First, not every household travels the distance in the same way. If a household owns a car, it is much easier to get from point A to point B regardless of weather. What about an elderly member of the community who is in reality confined to one room or one floor of a house. How do we factor in the exceptions of food that is delivered outside of the question of consumption? What does it mean if I have a garden in my backyard? All of these questions offer real micro-nuances that affect the application of a definition to a community or a group based on the collection of static data to represent a moving community.

Impact and the Beneficiaries

The food desert is an impactable definition of food access by identifying the static point by which the philanthropic community can evaluate the effectiveness of dollars spent on alleviating food insecurity. If Organization A can get food sources into a community, they have created an impact that can be measured concerning the term or description of a food desert. What this chapter has also identified that the name of the food desert replaces the multiplicity of the experience of the community in light formalized definition of access. To see this in practice, we can look to the stories that are told about food access at different levels of the philanthropic process. I choose the term story here because it offers the action based on the motivation of a term. In another way, all communication is a product of a fragmented story that connects the speaker with the storyteller.

The story, or narrative, is also important in a rhetorical sense to evaluate the direction of the ideograph or any term in general. Returning to Fischer's distinction between the rational world paradigm and narrative paradigm, this becomes a reality for philanthropists. First if the rational world paradigm identifies the belief and one can rationalize the understanding of the meaning within a context, this is a direct connection with the impact paradigm. Does not the reliance on data to identify the issues of food access within a community not posit that one can learn about food access apart from the experience if the right data is present? Or in another way, by measuring the distance between a store and the household we can measure the severity of food access.

For this reason, this thesis will turn to identify the story, or a narrative of a personal experience, as a more accurate site to measure the impact or result of a community impact. To put this another way, by looking to the stories that are told about an issue and the change in the narrative is the authentic framing of social impact. By story or narrative, this thesis refers to the public expression of a personal experience. As an example, an understanding of food access is more accurate when it takes into the account the lived experience of the community. This reinforces that social issues are experienced as opposed to learned or rationalized.

To think of such a focus in light of "impact" is to think of a paradigm that identifies a means by which we can define and thus understand the implications of impact separate from the rational paradigm. The difference in this case between the impact and the narrative paradigm is that the impact narrative uses a story to identify a goal and starting position, whereas the process treats the narrative as the instance of social injustice. Impact Philanthropy views narrative as epistemic, as opposed to a process that treats stories as ontological. The story is then the rhetorical impact of the ideograph, or in another way, the result of the motivation for the state's connection with a narrative. The rational world paradigm treats the story of the affected citizen as a site for proving impact as opposed to a site of the experience itself. Not only is this the ideal moment for a conversation about engagement in light of the voices also shifting to community focus, but also regarding the terminology and definitions that surround issues that this paper focuses on regarding the dynamics of food access. The other unique aspect around the

current moment within literature around philanthropy and impact is the increasing knowledge or interest in evaluating the effectiveness of a connection between the collective impact initiative and the affected community.

This process has been referred to as a "beneficiary feedback loop". Daniel Stid refers to beneficiaries as ""they [Beneficiaries] aren't buying your service; rather a third party is paying you to provide it to them. Hence the focus shifts more toward the requirements of who is paying versus the unmet needs and aspirations of those meant to benefit"⁷⁹ Therefore the exchange of capital is between the funder and the organization, in this case, the beneficiary is the community whom is receiving the service. While the market exchange is different between the funder and organization than, say, with a producer and consumer, the function of the current system feels much like this. Organizations or foundations place grants up for auction, and different organizations or networks will bid representing projects aimed at meeting the definition of the project that has been introduced.

Now this definition is different for varied grants. Some organizations announce grants with a target project in mind. Take for example this language from the Denver Foundation's web page "The Foundation provides numerous grants through its Community Grants Program, donor-advised funds, and Strengthening Neighborhoods

⁷⁹ Twersky, Fay, Phil Buchanan, and Valerie Threlfall. "Listening to Those Who Matter Most: The Beneficiaries." Stanford Social Innovation Review. Spring 2013. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries.

Program to help address food insecurity in Metro Denver."⁸⁰ This is a directed grant, but it also gives the applicant some flexibility in how they connect to the project. Even in this case though the organization needs to make a pitch to the foundation, they need to sell themselves to receive the grant. The pitch is both an attempt to show the pragmatics of an organization, but also to show a need to support the project based on the impact it is causing within the community. Thus the foundation is a consumer of the service, in the sense that the foundation is "hiring" an independent contractor to carry out actions that support their mission statement.

This is why impact is important regarding the communication between the grantee and the funder. To receive funds, the grantee must pitch their ideas for the project to the foundation and to be persuaded the foundation the application must prove the impact that their project will have. Therefore, a project that can predict a measurable outcome is best situated to meet the requirements for a grant. To identify a "food desert" is to offer a way to name and therefore "prove" change within a space by a means of a measurable definition. We can move consumers closer to store than thus have an impact on shrinking the food desert.

And yet, the beneficiary in this case is always secondary. The beneficiary is an observer who can benefit from the process but is not necessarily a direct agent involved within the change process itself. Therefore in the very ways that we arrange agents within an impact network facilitates the relationship that the network shares with the

⁸⁰ "Driving Local Activities and Leadership." Home. Accessed November 15, 2015.
<http://www.denverfoundation.org/Community/Strengthening-Neighborhoods/Home>.

social issue, and how it engages with that issues. Thus, the agent who is affected by food access is a secondary concern to the definitional fidelity that allows for a proof of impact.

A few comments: first, how is it that we can define an issue apart from the lived experience of a community affected by that issue? It seems that the means by which is the issue of food access are apparent are in its functioning within a community site. Secondly, if the beneficiary is a secondary concern within the dynamics of the relationships that community agents share within spaces, then the "impact" may be measured apart from the lived experience of the community itself.

I would like to stress that this is perhaps a broad generalization of the philanthropic communications process or the community engagement processes, but it is the logical conclusion of the literature that is driving key research and policy changes. To reinforce a process based on an ideal that is separate from that process seems to introduce a possibility of arbitrariness within the engagement loop. Take the issue of food access and specifically the notion of a "food desert". Thus far this thesis has argued that the "food desert" narrative or the story that is told as the definition of the name "food desert" is not an accurate representation of the issues faced by communities struggling with the issues of food access.

And yet, the term itself is useful, and according to the thesis of impact philanthropy, a necessary step to create a common agreement on the actions of a collective impact initiative. The shared definition, or the deployment of the a shared

name of the name that is given to the process by an agent with the power to move that process, is functionally more important than an accurate definition.

While I would not argue that there is a conscious element to undermine engagement opportunities, there is an undeniable current to the existing structure for funding projects. The ways in which we ask projects to be framed and evaluated identifies a current paradigm by which we share and communicate stories or understandings of social issues. We define them in relation to shared terms, but, in this case, one of the terms that we regularly use to communicate actively undermines the process of engaging with the population that is affected by that issue. This disconnection undermines positive opportunities for the expansion of social change movements and causes.

As Twersky, Buchanan, and Threlfall argue,

"There is certainly a strong moral argument for listening to the people you seek to help. Who among us would want others deciding what is right for us without being asked how we feel about it and how we are experiencing it? But the cases in health care and education demonstrate that there is also an essential effectiveness argument for hearing from those we want to help."⁸¹

In cases where the community agent is a necessary involvement, or that the agent is a member of the process of data collection, there is a beneficial relationship between involvement and engagement outcomes. And yet, in the case that is this paper's primary focus the result is different. The definition of the food desert is a measurement that can

⁸¹ Twersky, Fay, Phil Buchanan, and Valerie Threlfall. "Listening to Those Who Matter Most: The Beneficiaries." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Spring 2013. Accessed November 15, 2015. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries. 45

be collected as separate from the experience of the community in that distance can be drawn on a map and economic indicators evaluated separately from engagement with a community. The food desert is identified, and then the notions of how to impact are developed in relation to the definition as opposed to the lived experiences of the community. Therefore, our framing of the issue does not necessarily even take into account the experiences of those affected.

Secondly, the issue with the use of the term is that it can be disproven or "solved" without actual progress being made in relation to the core issues or causes of food access. Take the case of a grocery store being built in the community. This would technically fix the issue of the food desert, but may not meet the needs of the community based on price of real access. And yet, this would illuminate the need for the funder to look to the issue in that community based on the formal means by which we communicate about the issue that underlies that concern or project. This same fact can also be used by "opponents" of the issue or project. Perhaps to the extreme, but take for example Glen Beck, who has aired two segments on his show "debunking" the existence of "food deserts." While Glen Beck is not actively involved in board meetings and grant funds, there is a concern that such a challenge can be made in a similar way within a space. This "disproving" of the fundamental fidelity of the definition can undermine real progress, or silence a voice that is asking or looking for support.

What this paper identifies as a core concern of the philanthropic community is by its nature not an attempt to critique the agents within the process, but instead what has

become a normalized action within an active community. In this sense what this thesis seeks to propose is a conception of a means by which to communicate regarding social issues in a way that identifies the processes by which these instances are unique but also generic. This is what impact philanthropy identifies: there is a macro element to the functional experience of a social issue that can be defined as a common link between differing parties. In this way to understand the influence that a project is having within a community, we need to identify the changes in the common spaces that affect all agents. But, the limit is once again the micro. For we cannot move from the macro to the micro but rather the opposite way.

To complement the ongoing conversation regarding the feedback of communication with communities, this thesis proposes a blending rhetorical theories of communication with philanthropic engagement platforms. By this, I mean that by looking to how rhetoric treats the complexity of language the philanthropic community can better articulate the means by which communication becomes a reflection of action. And yet, the process is also beneficial to communication studies or rhetoric more specifically in that this project seeks to propose a means by which we can articulate an extra-linguistic understanding of social issue. In this way, I mean that if the definition of food desert is too limited to be "constrained" within the name, then what must be identified is that which is also contained but more formally.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Narrative Paradigm of Philanthropy

The narrative is an intersection of fragmented narratives given meaning based on their unique contexts and experiences. To use the language of Lazarus, the story is the name of the multiplicity of names of names. By this I mean that these names of names are not said to represent the name. The names of names are not added to be the story, but the story is unique combination of names. The story is then not a combination but an intersection of narrative flows. We cannot rationalize the story. The question that guides a search for a narrative philanthropy is then how do we, as technocrats and engagement coalitions, treat the story as the authentic site of a connection without ruining it with our perspective and "expertise?" What happens if we do something radical and listen first and then act? What if we treat the story as a deployed term?

By using the story as a site of connecting with the change in the community, we also identify the different perspective that are used to motivate an understanding of the issue in a broader sense. Therefore, we can look to the stories that are being told by different groups of actors in relation to the issue of food access to identify what Fischer refers to as a narrative fidelity or a consistency between the story of the affected and the

story of the funder. This ought not to be understood as the closeness of the story, as in do they say the same thing. Instead do they mean the same thing based on the agents speaking the story.

Looking to the story as a site of impact changes how we value impact for it necessitates the inclusion of the affected agent into the process as opposed to the product of the story. A survey of the stories from agents connected with resources regarding food insecurity identifies the implications of the food desert paradigm for food insecurity engagement. In other words, do agents in power within the philanthropic space tell the same story about what is considered food access as those affected? This chapter will model such a comparison by looking at the public stories of food access told within the Denver community to highlight the connection with the philanthropic narrative.

The narrative paradigm does not argue that we ought to reject data or the other factors that are measured within impact, but rather that these are not treated as ends in themselves. This means that data and impact are used as means to connect or compare stories to measure their relationship and/or fidelity. Data itself is the product of a story when that story is the personal connection or relationship between a community and the issue of food access. Therefore a survey in which a community member responds and documents their personal consumption of produce is also a story, in that it is the public expression of a private experience. The narrative paradigm argues that we ought to compare stories and then measure the movement of these stories; i.e., stories are ontological.

The narrative paradigm of philanthropy is fundamentally a perspective that identifies what Fischer calls narrative fidelity. As a reminder Fischer defines this as "whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be truth in their lives."⁸² Thus in terms of philanthropy we look to what stories are known to be true by the philanthropists, in that what stories about an issue are known shape what programs will be funded. Impact is an example of one of these stories. The known story is how we evaluate success or change within community, and this framing affects what other stories we value. To know that impact is accurate is to fund projects or programs that can prove impact or follow the formal definitions proposed by the foundation or nonprofit. For this reason we can find countless examples of grants that require the fund requester to either prove they are collective impact or have a means to measure impact. Here are two examples from large foundations in Denver:

The Piton Foundation/Gary Williams Investment:

"We seek out investments that generate measurable impact on social and financial returns as appropriate for the investment under consideration. We understand the nature of "impact" looks different depending upon the strategy. For example, we measure the impact of philanthropic investment in a community-based organization differently than a market-rate investment in a start-up company that is organized around achieving financial and social return."⁸³

⁸² Fischer, Walter R. "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument." In *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, by John Louis. Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill, 265-87. New York: Guilford Press, 1999. 247

⁸³ "Investment Philosophy." Investment Philosophy. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.garycommunity.org/investment-philosophy>.

Colorado Health Foundation:

"The Colorado Health Foundation shares a belief held in philanthropy that working together helps us all achieve more...A typical collective impact framework involves a centralized infrastructure with a backbone organization steering the work, dedicated staff and a process designed to produce a common agenda, shared measurement, coordinated and ongoing communication, and mutual reinforcement among partner activities."⁸⁴

What is again key about this focus on impact is that even the authors themselves argue that it takes a generation to identify or look to the impact within a community as a result of an engagement plan. This means that what is adopted is rhetorical as opposed to necessarily practical. The adoption of collective impact within the frameworks of foundations is tactical in order to be a part of the conversation or the trend within the field. The choice to use the term impact, to require collective impact, or even just to use the language as the core to an organizational framework is a choice made without the "proof" that impact causes impact.

Impact is the name of the name when we treat the movement within a community as the name. The name is the experience of and the name of the name is the locator of the experience that does not represent the experience. Therefore what a narrative philanthropy asks is how do we deal with the name of the name without replacing the name? Returning to the example of food access what this approach offers is that we look

⁸⁴ "Collective Impact." The Colorado Health Foundation. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.coloradohealth.org/collectiveimpact/>.

to the experience and compare the experience within the narratives that are told about those experiences. Thus is the name of the name sharing a fidelity with the name? Does the name of the name that is known to be true share a relationship with the experience of food access?

To compare the stories surrounding the issue of food access we look to different types of stories or stories with different audiences. First we will look to the stories from policy articles, policy makers, or formal government documents. This is considered the political story of food insecurity or the narratives that guide policy makers. Secondly, we will look to the story of the affected community. By looking to the fidelity of the stories between the different "layers" of storytelling we can identify patterns and/or tensions. The one assumption that we must carry into this next section is that the story of the affected community is the most accurate or closely connected with food access. By this I mean that the community affected by the issue will always be a better starting point of comparison when compared with the political and/or social stories of access.

Political Stories

From the report "The Need for More Supermarkets in Colorado":

"In order for residents to eat better, Colorado must address the significant need for supermarkets and food resources in its communities."⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Karpyn, Allison, John Weidman, Brian Lang, and Deborah Thomas. "The Need for More Supermarkets in Colorado." Accessed November 15, 2015.

From the report "HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL: Encouraging Grocery Investment in Colorado":

"Access to affordable fresh food is a critical component for healthy eating. Many of our communities don't have nearby grocery stores, making it difficult to get healthy, affordable food. Research shows that the presence of nearby supermarkets helps people eat better and maintain a healthier weight. Supermarkets also provide needed jobs and economic development. Additionally, the impact of the recent recession has put healthy eating beyond many peoples' budgets, impacting children in particular. The rate of Colorado children living in poverty increased an astonishing 50 percent between 2000 and 2008, compared with a 6 percent increase nationwide."⁸⁶

"As a result, the City of Denver has focused on making nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables more readily available to our residents by supporting investments in supermarkets and grocery stores. In September 2009, we held Denver's first supermarket summit to hear from retailers about the challenges of investing in underserved neighborhoods, and, as a result, convened the Denver Food Access Task Force to help develop a public-private response to the issue. Since beginning this work, we've been able to support the opening of a Colorado Ranch Market in one of the City's underserved communities."⁸⁷

From the Colorado Health Foundation:

"Limited financial resources are an obstacle for many households in purchasing healthy food. In addition, for most food desert residents, there is simply nowhere to buy affordable, nutritious food. According to the American Rural Sociological Society, in many of the poorest urban neighborhoods, as well as 800 rural counties in the United States, there are simply no decent food stores."⁸⁸

From Livewell Colorado, a foundation dedicated to promoting healthy living:

⁸⁶ Lang, Brian, and Eugene Kim. "HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL: Encouraging Grocery Investment in Colorado." December 2011. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.coloradohealth.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=5625>.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Beck, Christina. "Food Access In Colorado." Food Access in Colorado - The Colorado Health Foundation. July 2010. www.coloradohealth.org/.../DownloadA...

"At LiveWell Colorado, we know that ensuring access to fresh, healthy food is a critical component of fighting our country's rising obesity epidemic. In fact, two decades of public health data affirm that access to fresh, healthy food retail impacts eating behavior and, in turn, health. A report from 2009, Healthy Food, Healthy Coloradans: The Need for More Supermarkets in Colorado, shows that supermarkets are concentrated in a few select areas throughout our state, and we must do more to ensure that all Coloradans have access to fresh, healthy food."⁸⁹

From the Denver Department of Environmental Health:

"The presence of a full service grocery store can have multiple positive outcomes on a community. Having a grocery store in a neighborhood contributes to the economic vitality of the area by creating jobs, anchors other development and boosts housing values. Food tends to be more affordable and also healthier in full-service supermarkets as opposed to other options such as corner stores and fast food restaurants. Living within close proximity to a grocery retailer has been associated with increased access to healthy foods, food security, and lower rates of obesity and other diet-related diseases."⁹⁰

The overwhelming theme in these passages is a focus on the role of the grocery store within alleviating food injustice. This connection with the grocery store makes sense in light of the interest in a geographic understanding of food access as a product of the food desert narrative. By looking to study how the closeness to a grocery store affects health we see a clear interest in using the logic of the food desert to frame the issue as a whole.

The grocery store is also ultimately considered access. Take Stewart's quote documenting that stores are concentrated in a few areas of the state, and thus we need to

⁸⁹Stewart, Maren. "May 03 2012 Puzzled about Food Deserts?" LiveWell's Commitment. May 3, 2012. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://livewellcolorado.org/livewells-commitment/newsroom/livewell-blog/may-03-2012-puzzled-about-food-deserts>.

⁹⁰ Denver Department of Environmental Health (December 2014). Food system policies and population health: Moving toward collective impact in Denver. Denver, CO.

increase access to food within the rest of the state. Thus, the grocery store equals access for this policy maker. This also resonates with Governor Hickenlooper and the Collective Impact food report.

Also, when we look to Mayor Hancock's passage another interesting focus on the fidelity of the grocery store narrative can be observed. The Mayor speaks of a summit held with retailers to talk about the barriers to investing in poor, urban communities. It is interesting that the summit is held between policymakers and store owners about how best to support stores as opposed to including communities within those conversations. This identifies that once again the grocery store is understood as access in that the barriers are viewed to be on the side of the retailers. Therefore how do we support retailers to increase access?

What is also key is that the passages above are not in a vacuum, but, in fact, these reports shape the ways that community food access is measured and addressed. This narrative around the grocery store is tied to larger interests in economic redevelopment and attempts to make "attractive neighborhoods" a term often used in recent Denver budgets and literature. The Denver City Council's Priorities for the 2015 Budget, in fact, propose the following as a priority for the budget:

Safe, Healthy and Attractive Neighborhoods -- • Increase number of Police academies and patrol staffing. • Fund a plan to identify mitigation strategies for areas with high crime concentration. • Facilitate development of grocery stores in underserved areas. • Increase the number and coordination of neighborhood plans. • Improve and maintain

Parks' facilities such as medians, restrooms, and high-use areas; and provide adequate seasonal enforcement⁹¹

It is interesting that this priority of the grocery store is not classified as an "economic development and job creation" interest (which was an additional category), but rather one of fixing blighted communities. At a time when recent housing patterns are already pushing rent and values up in the affected communities, driving families out of their historical homes, and whatever else we might loosely call "gentrification," what is the interest in this proposal if it is not to attract new residents and taxpayers? This places the livelihoods of those already there in peril both because the services are not connected with their needs, and the increase of grocery stores will have effects on housing prices and other basic needs. Making a community more attractive pushes up prices and rents quickening an active process of shifting community identity. In this way the funding of the expansion of commercial sites of food activity can be said to have a negative impact on the ability of families to meet their long-term needs.

Also, the City of Denver is currently allocating funds for research and investment in increasing grocery store opportunities in "needy communities". To support this effort, the City of Denver has funded two separate healthy food survey initiatives since 2013: "The Denver Healthy Food Assessment Initiative" and the "Partnership for Healthy Food". Based on the published "Mayor's Budgets" from 2013-2015 these programs cost the city \$509,170. Now not all of these funds were public or taxpayer dollars, as some

⁹¹ "Mayor Hancock Announces 2015 Budget Proposal." Department of Finance. September 15, 2014. Accessed November 15, 2015. <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-department-of-finance/newsroom/news-releases/2014/mayor-hancock-announces-2015-budget-proposal.html>.

were funded by private contributions from Foundations and donors, but this expenditure represents a large commitment to reinforcing the active narratives that exist within the City. This can be seen in the project overview for the Partnership for Healthy Food which states: "The Partnerships for Healthy Foods funds a selection of pilot sites to increase healthy food offerings in corner stores, support local grocers in implementing marketing strategies, and encourage youth and adults to purchase and eat healthier foods."⁹²

Community Stories

For this project, the communal stories are those collected to build the mini-documentary "Planting Food Justice," which was produced by the author of this thesis. The following are quotes and passages collected from residents, organizers, and staff interviewed in support of this film. Names have been removed due to requests from those interviewed, but the video is available online publically.⁹³

Community organizer located in Cole:

"What we do know about the place where we live the neighborhoods where we are all living and working in Five points, Cole, Clayton, North City Park, Globeville, if you live here you are more likely to experience the disease like

⁹² "Mayor Hancock Announces 2015 Budget Proposal." Department of Finance. September 15, 2014. Accessed November 15, 2015. <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-department-of-finance/newsroom/news-releases/2014/mayor-hancock-announces-2015-budget-proposal.html>.

⁹³ "Projects." CoraCommunications. August 4, 2015. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.coracommunications.org/events-projects>.

diabetes associated with poor eating, and maybe poor access to food, than if you lived somewhere else in Denver. It's an individual challenge, making an individual choice for yourself and your family, but it's also a community challenge."

A community resident of Northeast Denver:

"I do the majority of my shopping at Sam's, which is here in Stapleton forty-five minutes going and forty-five minutes coming back. I know that it is far from my community, but I want my family to eat healthy things, so because of that, I prefer to leave and take a long time to go one place or another to find healthy things."

Farmer's Market Vendor:

"Food is medicine; food is health."

A community resident of Northeast Denver:

"Sometimes you go to buy oranges, and they are like fifty to seventy-five cents an orange. Sometimes people tend to buy a bag of chips because it is way cheaper, a dollar nine with tax. Instead of spending the money on fruits and vegetables, they would rather buy a bag of chips or cookies or something to feed the kids.

Sometimes you shop for fruits and vegetables and it's more what you pay for that,

and you know it's healthy but you want to spend less, so you buy more junk food."

A community resident of Five Points in Northeast Denver:

"If you are not welcome to be outside of there you need to be self-sustaining. Five Points, any need you had you could meet it within the community. You could walk to it. From your medical needs to dental needs, shoes, shopping, restaurants, movie theater. Dancing. Whatever. When that food was taken out of the community that caused the neighboring businesses to suffer die and go away. Because when they had to leave to get the food, well while I'm out let me handle all this other stuff. So you start supporting your local people less and less."

A community resident of Five Points in Northeast Denver:

"You mean the Unsafeway? I don't shop there."

A community resident of Five Points in Northeast Denver:

"I can drive for about fifteen, twenty minutes in my neighborhood and just be exposed to Fritos, cookies, Hostess, and those are the options our kids walking from school are exposed to."

A few key notes from these passages that offer unique connections with the community. First, we learn from one story that economic access is different than geographic access. The ability to get to a store is not correlated with increased access to fruits and vegetables. Second community members are willing to travel long distances and/or spend long amounts of time in transit to provide "healthy" food for their families. This reinforces that either there is no local food access, or one needs to travel to get to "healthy" food. Third, food is referenced as being more than just that which is consumed. We can see this in the connection between food and medicine, but also the broader conversations about health. This is a term that is implied in the political and social stories about nutrition but from the affected community we see a more direct connection with the implications of diet.

When listening to the conversations from the community it is hard not to be moved by the concern that is apparent in their stories for families and their children. What is moving from the stories is what cannot be printed in this report. The smiles and glances as stories are told. The way eyes light up. The communal story of food access in North Denver is primarily focused on health. Individuals who suffer from food security can relate to others in the same situation, even if that situation is different based on household or other factors. The story told in relation are very different in their relationships with the storytellers but often emotions remain the same.

The role that health plays in the narrative around food access is an interesting pattern that is recognized in the passages from above. Health is the primary relationship

that the community shares with food access as it is the necessary side-effect of instances of food injustice. To not have access to healthy food options is also to lack the ability to control nutritional intake. Eating foods like chips instead of oranges (as the one story relates) leads to long- and short- term health impacts. The story of food access is then talked about, or constantly related to the impact that it is having on the community telling the story.

Two other pieces of information that are telling regarding the connection between the community's story and the issue of food access. First the written report paired with the video, named North Denver Food Systems Assessment Report and Findings, found that the households on average consumed between one and four serving of fruits and vegetables per day, with 79% of the total response falling within these categories.⁹⁴ What is also unique is that when comparing the data is that a community resident is more likely to eat more than five servings as opposed to less than one. While this is a fairly small difference -- 12% to 9% respectively -- it does identify that there is a particular story of access that exists within the broader stories being told. In other words, even within a broad patterning of stories identifying lack of access there is a recognizable story from the individual perspective that identifies access in the community. Even if access is not the story per se what we do identify is that there are personal stories that identify pathways to healthy food access and adequate nutrition, even within the food desert.

⁹⁴ O'Connor, Drew. "Northeast Denver Food Systems Assessment Report and Findings." <https://thedryspoon.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/communityreport-final.pdf>.

The reason that this thesis looks to the fruits and vegetables question as the primary key to the personal story is that this response is the most representative of food security in the formal sense. Formal here refers to the name we give to the appearance of an issue, or in this report the grocery store is a formal representation of the food access. This is because the grocery store is a localized form of food security based on the broader definition at play. Relying on a formal definition recognizes that it is key to identifying a metric for engaging with the underlying practices, or, in other words, there is still a need to measure.

Fruits and vegetables consumption is the least formal "formal" means for communicating or identifying how it is that we are communicating about the issue of food security in that it offers a form of food insecurity or security that is directly connected to the experiencing of an issue. The grocery store is a secondary relationship in that it is not a direct connection between the consumer and the site of food access. The amount of fruits and vegetables consumed is the direct representation of what is broadly considered adequate access. Thus, we ought to be measuring what people are eating as opposed to how they are getting it.

Secondly, the report also surveyed community members about where they typically purchase or buy fruits and vegetables. Of residents who consumed one to two servings of fruits and vegetables per day 47.7% shopped at a chain store, 46.4% at a club store, and 47.1% at a discount or convenient store.⁹⁵ Of residents consuming three to

⁹⁵ ibid

four serving per day 31.6% shopped at a chain store, 34.1% at a club store, and 31.9% at a discount or convenience store.⁹⁶ Finally of residents who consumed more than five serving per day 9.7% shopped at a chain store, 7.1% at a chain store, and 9.5% at a discount or convenience stores.⁹⁷ When taken into context with the stories listed above this data identifies that consumption of fruits and vegetables does not change based on the site of consumption. This means that either communities have access to food and yet are unable to afford the food, as in the quote about expensive oranges. The other option is that the site of consumption is not positively correlated with access to fruits and vegetables meaning that grocery store is not an accurate measurement of food access.

Narrative Infidelity

The first connection that can be made between the different stories as presented in the previous sections (political and communal) identifies that the grocery store is a primary means of identifying food access from the political perspective. From the personal we do not learn that the grocery is not a means of identifying access, but rather that the idea of food access cannot be measured through the grocery store alone. In addition, we cannot look to formal definitions in light of functional realities of food access.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ ibid

The findings of this report are limited in that the stories surveyed represent a small number of stories, but also a smaller geographical focus. And yet, what is valuable from this perspective is that we can identify a lack of fidelity between the stories of policy makers and the communities which are affected by the issue. Even this is perhaps not a novel argument in this thesis, but what is unique about this framing is that the conversation that is happening outside philanthropy per say is one which is more aligned with the policy vs. the community. By this I mean that the comments of quotes from social media and social storytelling more closely align with the story that is held to be true by the policy maker as opposed to the community affected in this way.

The overall narrative is further shaped by the grocery narrative within the layers that control active political power, resource distribution, and engagement in general. This is meaningful in that the community affected by an issue is not engaging with but rather experiencing the issue. Thus, it is troubling for the telos of a project when the narrative is controlled by the existing structure that has so far have not made a dent on the issue of food injustice. The existing power structure identifies both what is considered to be true and what can be said.

This thesis proposes the expansion of these questions in both a prescriptive and normative manner. First, in terms of direct policy changes, it seems apparent to increase the support for farmer's markets and suppliers to farmer's markets. Recent support for urban farming and residential sales offer promising starts, but when compared to the

financial support offered to grocers it seems that the money is not being distributed based on impact potential.

When this project has identified that an increase in grocery stores does not in any way affect consumption of fruits and vegetables where else could this money be spent? What if these funds were used to cover permit costs for farmers markets? Or to subsidize urban farmers? What if this money was given directly to hungry households? Used by the food bank to buy food? Fund education and growing classes in communities? Actually used to build a grocery store? These would also seem to have more of an impact than how they are currently being used.

In terms of its normative claim, this project identifies an ethical approach to philanthropic engagement that prioritizes the stories of individuals and households affected by social issues. The most recent shift in the collective impact or network-oriented approach to social engagement has been to acknowledge the unique insights that can be gained from listening to, and taking seriously, the feedback from beneficiaries of a process or product. By listening to those affected, we learn how well our plan is working. And yet, the listening is secondary when what is most key is evaluating the project. Instead, we ought to do something radical: we should listen first and act second. By building storytelling and story collection into the motivation for a project we position engagement in a more authentic way to relay the voices and political actions of those in affected communities. Story collection forces us to listen to stories, to hear in their own words what is happening in the everyday life that is experiencing social injustice.

This begins at the level of the sources of the data used in this report. A key change that we need to make is the standard used to qualify or legitimize a person's perspective. It is interesting that across the board official reports are produced by a select team of technocrats skilled at producing and analyzing data. Each of these processes includes an attempt to engage with community residents and members in order to collect additional and cooperating data. Take for example the "Food system policies and population health: Moving toward collective impact in Denver" report published in 2015. Every single "key informant" is identified by their organization or business as opposed to their residency within an affected community. This is not to say that some of those interviewed are not residents of the affected communities, but instead to note that their identification is based on the industry's assumption of the need to qualify or validate those interviewed. Why is it that no one was interviewed as a "Five Points resident"? Who is the expert on a social issue? The expert who defines it or the agent who lives it?

If the bright line for informant status is based on the qualifications of work or occupation, then we will never interview the undocumented, unemployed, hungry family. We will never be asked to interview authentically those who bear the full weight of the issues of food insecurity and hunger. This is again not to say that those included in this report are not valid, but rather that they give us only a slice of the story. A story that is both relatable and unique for individual households. The stories that we need to hear are those told by the politically invisible, the disenfranchised, the vulnerable. These are the stories of impact.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This thesis has sought to defend two core arguments in light of the interest in both the impact and food access narrative of social philanthropy. First the field of philanthropy's adoption of an impact paradigm ultimately undermines the ability for community voices to be included in the active conversation about change looks like in the community. The focus on philanthropy seeks to prioritize the ability to connect and read data as a means to connect wide ranges of nonprofits and social engagement teams under a common framework. By doing so we allow for fewer agents to have control over the process of engagement and shift the rhetorical notion of impact in light of the state of philanthropy. The implication is that the agents who are given power within the state have the ability to maintain that state.

Secondly, the existing narratives around food access are unable to take into account both the nuance of food access but also the complexity of the issue. In this was our definitions identify a clear path by which impact oriented organizations are able to engage with a representation of an issue as opposed to the issue itself. By attempting to document the definitional aspects of food access we risk alienating food access as a lived experience itself.

Finally, this thesis is an attempt to think about what role storytelling can play within community change in order to bring community voices back into the process or engagement. On a personal note I have actually taken the steps to formalize a business and engagement model around storytelling called CORA Communications. CORA is an

adaption of the Socratic idea of the chora, which was the source of being and matter. The chora was a spinning ball of mass which was stamped by the gods into different shapes and forms. In this was the gods could create a horse by stamping the chora with the horse form.

While the storytelling collecting aspect of this project is probably the most raw it the framing of stories as an engagement tool which will propel action in light of this thesis. This thesis is then the beginning to a vocation of collecting stories in order to force the voice of affected communities back into the philanthropic process. At a time where stories are not valued past their use as testimonials this project seeks to bring a theoretical lens to the process of connecting with stories.

Perhaps the most useful focus for future action has been the question of what does story fidelity look like for philanthropists? The question while unanswered still acknowledges the attempt to formalize the location of storytelling as the primary means by which to communicate with communities about the issue that affect them. The core belief which drives CORA is that by including affected communities in the conversation about engagement we create the most authentic relationship with change and progress. Thus this thesis is beginning of a mission to collect stories which are often unheard, forgotten, or ignored. That is where real change begins, in the process of listening.

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