Introduction

Sixty miles north of downtown Los Angeles, California's interstate highway 5 climbs into the low-lying Tehachapi mountains, which mark the southernmost border of the San Joaquin Valley. Before the descent into the Great Central Valley, of which the San Joaquin is a part, the impressive vista of this agricultural cornucopia becomes visible. Averaging fifty miles wide and four hundred and fifty miles in length, the expanse of land is quilted in muted colors, created by patches of cultivated cropland.[1] This is the heartland of California's capitalist agriculture, which has dominated the Valley economy since the 1870s. In the 1990s cotton is a major, though dwindling, crop in the Valley, grown in the fields of Kern County and northward, in vast tracts in Kings, Tulare, Fresno, and Madera counties. On the Valley's east side, cotton fields mingle with acres of potatoes, vineyards, and other crops in an area dotted by small towns. On the west side the balance shifts, and the small towns are overshadowed by vast expanses of crop land.

Corcoran, a center of cotton production on the west side, is symbolic of both the expansiveness of the cotton industry here and the fate of its workers. Corcoran is a small town, dwarfed by the Salyer and Boswell ranches with their private airports, ginning and processing plants, and large private homes which loom over the more modest homes typical of Corcoran. Cotton picking is now mechanized, and plants are cleared by a flame-throwing dragon of a machine that burns the naked cotton stalks as it lumbers along the rows. The same shacks that once housed thousands of workers on labor camps have been moved to the

town and now house the families of cotton workers displaced by mechanization.

The history of the cotton industry in this Valley, and of its workers, emerged from a changing interrelationship among growers, processors and investors, workers, unions and their sympathizers, and agents of the local, federal, and state governments. This is a study of these groups in the years from 1919, when cotton became a major crop, through the introduction of the New Deal in 1933, to 1939 when the United States' entry into the war directly altered conditions in cotton and paved the way for a contract labor program.

Migrant agricultural workers have until recently been largely ignored as active participants in United States history. Most studies have focused on the growth of capitalist agriculture, the related decline of the family farm, and the critical and foreboding implications this held for the Jeffersonian vision of a yeoman farmer–based democracy. If freeholding family farmers were the basis of a democratic society, it was argued, capitalist (or slave) agriculture was its antithesis. Studies of agricultural development in the United States became locked into the broader questions of American democracy and a Turnerian view of the West, which measured change against a mythologized past of conflict-free small farming thriving on a classless frontier. The focus of these studies was the family farmer and, by extension, the nature of American character and society.[2]

When noticed at all, field workers were usually considered only in relation to questions framed by these assumptions. Agricultural laborers were not conceptually included as part of the working class, but were viewed as a frightful and degrading result of the demise of the family farm. The most thoughtful studies of farm workers were exposés, written to sway public opinion on the complex arrangement of social, economic, and political power that perpetuated the conditions of farm workers: wages below the poverty level; abysmal housing and working conditions; the painful human toll recorded in the high rates of sickness and death and the short life expectancy; child labor and the attendant low education rates. Some authors wrote with perception and sensitivity of agricultural workers. Yet much like the history of workers in unskilled industries, the written history of farm workers became molded by the pressing conditions of their lives and thus obscured their long-term struggles. Pictured as victims of a brutal system, they emerged from these studies as faceless, powerless, passive, and, ultimately, outside the flow

of history. Racial, cultural, and ethnic stereotypes and systematic exclusion from the broader labor movement perpetuated this image. They were viewed as objects, not subjects, of history.[3]

Until the 1960s, historians had often viewed culture as "cultural baggage," comprised of allegedly negative attributes that precluded immigrants' successful participation in United States society. But then the social and political movements of the 1960s raised new questions for historians and prompted the examination of the history of those previously excluded. Historians began to examine culture in its broadest sense, and discussions of culture increasingly focused on a concern for the knowledge and representation of a person's values, universe, community, and social relations as they occurred in practice.[4]

E. P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman, and others paved the way for a generation of social historians who focused on workers as agents in history and sifted through previously ignored areas of family life, culture, the work place, and the community.[5] Women, Chicanos, African-Americans, and Native Americans—the others "not seen" in traditional history—slowly came to be viewed as important subjects in a richer historical mosaic. Yet the questions raised elsewhere about the interplay of workers and capital growth were not addressed in historical analyses of agriculture. Historians largely ignored the creative ways agricultural workers dealt with the conditions they faced and how they formed communities and social ties within a fragmenting system. By omission, historians relegated field workers to the condition of poor relations of the industrial working class. This omission reflected the long-standing neglect, particularly in agriculture, of unskilled, nonwhite workers by the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

This book attempts to rectify that neglect. Agricultural workers themselves, as producers of basic commodities in an economically strategic industry, were and are a vital part of the United States working class, and their history is an essential component of working-class history. This project began as a dissertation and has over the last decade developed into a book. At its inception I envisioned it as a contribution to debates in several historiographical areas: the United States working class, Mexicans and Chicanos, capitalist agriculture and the New Deal. My analysis was antithetical to the reigning discourse in the history of the trans-Mississippi West, in which the Turnerian view served as a key ideological underpinning in explaining American "exceptionalism" and as a rationalization for United States expansionism. I had, and still have, problems with the conceptualization of "the West" as a separate field. Such a

concept is Eurocentric, ignores the perspective of Native Americans and Mexicans, who used different geographic nomenclatures, and limits a long and rich history to the post-1848 era that followed United States acquisition of the territory. Yet this book does address questions that have been raised by what is being called the new Western history. Many new Western historians call Turner into question; others refuse to take Turner as the starting point for their work. Drawing heavily on decades of work by Chicano, Native American, Asian American, and women scholars of all groups, historians are creatively coming to grips with the intersection of class, gender, race, and nationality to develop a new concept of the region. As Pegge Pascoe points out, this area forms a unique laboratory for exploring these questions and linking them to larger trends within the United States as a whole. While my project was conceived well before the recent wave of new historiography on the trans-Mississippi West, it fits squarely into many of the questions being raised.[6]

While this study focuses on the California cotton industry and its workers, it is also driven by the underlying question of the relationship between structure and human agency, that is, to what degree were workers shaped by the economic, social, and political conditions they labored and lived within, and to what degree were they able, within this system, to shape their own lives.[7] Authors have debated for more than a century how much relative weight should be assigned to external constraints (structure) and how much to individual motivation (agency), and what the relation is between these factors. Karl Marx raised the question of the extent to which people make their own history and the extent to which they are molded by the historical and economic parameters inherited from the past.[8] Jean Paul Sartre contributed to the debate in 1963 in *Search for a Method*, where he argued that "man in a period of exploitation is *at once both* the product of his own product and a historical agent who can under no circumstances be taken as a product. The contradiction is not fixed; it must be grasped in the very moment of *praxis*. . . . [While] men make their history on the basis of real, prior conditions . . . it is *the men* who make it and not the prior conditions."[9] Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukács, and writers of the Frankfurt School also stressed the role of human consciousness and agency in history.[10] Louis Althusser claimed that, whereas Marx's earlier writings emphasized human agency, his later theory of historical materialism was shaped by the belief that a society's structural economic base determines

its superstructure. Althusser argued that the structural governed historical development, and he denied that human beings were the authors of this process.

In 1963 E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* rejected the institutional framework that had long dominated labor history and focused instead on working-class culture and the notion of human agency. Thompson clearly emphasized culture and human agency over structure. His very definition of class as a "cultural as much as an economic formulation" rejected the notion of economic determinism. Thompson defined class and class consciousness thus: "Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily. Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not."[11] In 1980, Perry Anderson challenged Thompson's conflation of class membership with class consciousness and reasserted the need for a Marxian conception: "Social classes may not become conscious of themselves, may fail to act or behave in common, but they still remain—materially, historically—classes."[12]

The long-standing debate about agency is important for a number of reasons. Questions about agency and structure have been raised about immigrant, especially undocumented, workers, which are of course pertinent to immigrant agricultural workers.[13] Some scholars, such as Manuel Castells, have argued that the vulnerable position of immigrant workers in relation to the economy and, moreover, the relationship of undocumented immigrants to the government that has defined them as "illegal" limit their "capacity for organization."[14] Yet Castells's inattention to workers distorts his analysis. Immigrants' vulnerable position has not, as Castells suggests, induced a numbing paralysis. Their relationships to unions, the state, capital, and other workers do differ from those of citizens. Yet the *particular* nature of that relation varies with the economic sector they enter, the economic climate, the level of working-class organization, and their particular relationship to the state.[15] Moreover, it depends on gender, culture, family structure, community, ethnic relations, and the subjective intangibles of human beings, their experience and consciousness: in short, it depends on human agency.[16]

Concerns about human agency and economic and political structure have been framed in other ways by U.S. labor historians. In the United States, the question of the relationship among workers, their culture, and economic and political factors has been raised in calls for a synthesis that would integrate social histories within the larger framework of economic, political, and social structures. David Brody's *Steelworkers in America* provided a model for this approach with its skillful elucidation of the dialectical interrelationship between Slavic steel workers and the industry in which they worked. Brody directly questioned the emphasis on cultural studies to the exclusion of the broader economic framework and questions.[17] As J. Carroll Moody points out, "unlike the many historians who studied class formation through a culturalist approach, Brody focuses on class development through the prism of economic structure, managerial policy, trade union practices, and the role of the state."[18] In *Beyond Equality* David Montgomery placed working-class culture within a political framework; in *Workers' Control in America* he addressed the New Deal in relation to workers; and in *The Fall of the House of Labor*, Montgomery placed that culture within the context of the economic structure of the industry, the actions of management, and the dialectical relationship between business and workers in fights over workers' control and the expropriation of "the manager under the worker's hat."[19] All of these studies presented a broader, more complex and dialectical framework within which to view working people.

My study examines the interrelation between human agency, economic structure, and the political forces of the state within the context of California agriculture. It focuses on several questions: How did the social and economic structure of specialized capitalist agriculture influence the formation of the labor force and relations between workers and the industry? How did the experiences and culture of workers shape conditions and affect their responses to those conditions? How did they differ between Mexican and Anglo workers? And, finally, what effects did the state have on the industry and the workers, and how did it alter class relations?

I chose California's cotton industry for several reasons. Cotton is a basic commodity, pivotal to the local, national, and international economy. Cotton has a rich history and, as an extremely labor-intensive crop until the mid-twentieth century, was critical in defining agricultural labor relations.[20] During the industrial revolution, the growing demand for cotton helped solidify and expand the slave system and, after 1865, the sharecropping system. By the early twentieth century, California agri-

culture and particularly cotton represented one of the most developed forms of capitalist agriculture in the world. In part this was a matter of sheer size. By 1929, California cotton ranches were the largest in the nation, whether measured by acreage, production, or number of workers employed. The introduction of cotton dramatically increased the demand for labor in California agriculture (thus changing the relation between the supply and availability of workers in other crops as well). Cotton workers became the largest labor force in the agricultural industry. The cotton industry proved pivotal in helping agricultural interests establish mechanisms to control the labor force. Partly as a result, the largest strikes of the 1930s erupted among cotton workers.

The question of the state's relation to capital and labor can also be examined within the California cotton industry. Cotton's economic importance to the national economy was reflected in the New Deal's programmatic focus on cotton as pivotal to agricultural recovery. New Deal intervention was pronounced in the cotton industry, through relief payments, federal mediation of labor disputes, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act, and had a decisive, if multilayered, effect on class relations.

The interlocking questions raised earlier about the relation between structure and agency are particularly apt in California agriculture, where the power imbalance between the agricultural industry and its workers has been so profound. In the cotton industry, affected though it was by the limitations inherent in agricultural production, steps were taken to standardize production and control labor. These steps facilitated a concentration of centralized economic control which in turn contributed to the development of intra-industrial organization. Agricultural interests used this organization both to deal with workers and to exert pressure on the government. The cotton industry—where the economic structure was powerful and well organized, the work force was relatively powerless, and the state system worked in conjunction with capital—provides a choice area to look at the interrelated questions of culture and agency, economic structure, and state intervention. Despite the strength of the industry and the relative weakness of its workers, workers did affect the nature of their labor. Workers' responses to conditions varied widely, dependent on experience, legal status, gender, historical consciousness, family and social structures, and economic conditions.

For material on Mexican workers, I draw heavily on Chicano historians such as Juan Gómez-Quiñones, Emilio Zamora, David Montejano, Ricardo Romo, and others who have explored the development of Mex-

ican communities in the United States and have studied the questions of Mexican migration and labor organizing.[21] Historians of Chicana history such as Vicki Ruiz, Antonia Castañeda, Deena González, and Sarah Deutsch have elucidated the interaction among gender, class, nationality, and culture.[22] Studies of migration, communities, and cross-border organizing between Mexico and the United States by scholars such as Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Javier Torres Parés, Rafael Alarcón, Jorge Durand, and Roger Rouse have contributed to a broader understanding of the transnational migration of people, ideas, networks, and culture, which is crucial to developing a valid history of Mexican workers of this period.[23]

Through extensive use of oral histories, this study elucidates the central roles of experience, consciousness, and culture in adaptation, response, and the changing relation between the industry and workers. Mexicans, who were the backbone of the labor force until the mid 1930s, had been shaped by their historical experience as transnational workers in Mexico and the United States. Until recently, they were often depicted as malleable peasant sojourners unlikely to join in effective collective action. This misperception came to be used as an ideological justification: the American Federation of Labor trundled it out to justify its inattention to Mexicans; growers used it to dismiss unrest as the product of fevered manipulation by outside agitators. The question of whether or not or to what extent Mexicans adapted and/or resisted remains part of a historical debate. Mario García has argued that because Mexicans "did not see themselves as members of a proletariat class but as Mexicans temporarily in a foreign land . . . they organized and protected themselves along ethnic lines [and] adjustment, not resistance, characterized their stay in the United States."[24] Others, such as Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Emilio Zamora, disagree. Pointing to a long, intense, and extensive participation by Mexicans in labor and social struggles on both sides of the border, they argue that Mexicans in the United States fought to preserve their culture, language, social institutions, and communities within a hostile environment. Far from being unconcerned about conditions, Mexican workers organized to obtain and protect their rights.[25]

This book is part of that debate. I argue that Mexican cotton workers were molded in the crucible of displacement and proletarianization in Mexico and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For several generations, both capital and workers spanned the border. The consciousness of this transnational work force could be described best by the term *sin fronteras* ("without borders").[26] Envisioning Mexicans as transnational workers clarifies their responses in the

California cotton fields. Mexicans who picked cotton were not only agricultural workers in California. They also had been (and many remained) miners, railroad workers, teachers, artisans, and industrial workers who labored on both sides of the border.

A transnational perspective elucidates Mexicans' experience in social conflicts that dramatically shaped their responses in the cotton fields. In Mexico, preindustrial peasants had hardly been consistently malleable agrarians. A succession of Indian and peasant revolts had punctuated Mexican history. With the proletarianization of workers in the late nineteenth century, Mexicans formed unions and participated in both rural and urban conflicts. These culminated in the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to 1920, the first major social upheaval of the twentieth century. Many who picked cotton were witnesses to and participants in the military conflict of these years, as well as in the labor organizations that crisscrossed the border. As I will argue, alliances in the teens between Mexican and Anglo radicals on both sides of the border in strikes, labor organizing, and even the ill-fated 1911 expedition by the IWW and the PLM to retake Baja California for insurgent forces formed a basis for later cooperation between progressive Anglos and Mexicans in California's agricultural fields in the 1930s. The myths and ideologies of Mexico and Mexican social upheavals, although still in the process of transformation, provided a vital historical reference point for these later conflicts. The interpenetration of organization and migration facilitated the transmission of ideas and organizations that would form a model for workers well into the 1930s.

Familial and social networks were also crucial to Mexicans' responses. Until recently, familial and social networks have often been considered unrelated to larger social conflicts defined by political parties, union structures, or male political and social formations. Activities outside these traditional spheres have at best been seen as auxiliary, or at worst been ignored as irrelevant. A broader vision of working-class life challenges the preeminence of unions and formal organizations as the essential forms of working-class organization and links women's networks, neighborhoods, and daily life to the development of social structures. This approach changes the perception of strikes, community organization, and social struggles. An analysis of families, neighborhoods, networks, and alliances reveals a more complex working-class response and includes community members who, while **not** directly involved in capitalist work relations, were still affected by **them** and participated in protests against them.

Recent scholarship has called into question the notion that capitalism undermined the family. Far from being destroyed, working-class families were as essential to capitalism as they were to workers' adaptation to the new economic order.[27] As John Bodnar pointed out, the ability of these networks to respond to the demands of work, the individual, and the group created a relationship between workers' families and capitalism that was "almost symbiotic."[28] Hardships imposed by industrialization, displacement, and migration certainly created tensions within these networks. Yet these same hardships simultaneously reinforced the individuals' dependency on human ties for survival. Overlapping familial, social, and community networks formed the structural basis for Mexicans' lives in California. Mexican communities in the United States were formed from these networks. They were also the basis for work crews, the basic unit of production in cotton. Through these networks Mexicans partially transferred their social relations from Mexico to the fields of California. These networks helped define relations among workers and between workers and contractors, and they helped workers adapt to larger transformations in social relations.

An ethos of mutuality infused these networks. As Emilio Zamora explained, "Mutualism incorporated such values as fraternalism, reciprocity, and altruism into a moral prescription for human behavior, a cultural basis for moralistic and nationalistic political action that was intended to set things right."[29] Within families and social networks, the belief in mutuality and reciprocity inspired attempts to subsume individual desires to the needs of the group and mediated tensions between individual impulses and collective needs. This mutual aid was crucial to workers' survival both as a group and individually. Yet mutualism, whether expressed in community organizations or within the families and work crews, was double-edged. At times it helped enforce work discipline. At other times it laid the basis for collective action and reformed some labor crews into de facto labor organizations.

Social networks, a sense of mutualism, past experience, and consciousness were crucial to the strike wave that tore through California's fields in 1933. Under the leadership of the progressive Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU), it culminated in a strike by 18,000 cotton workers. Historians have focused primarily on the CAWIU,[30] yet oral histories from leaders and participants elucidates the complexity of workers' responses. The union, while acting as an umbrella organization, was small, poor, and lacked the resources to wage a major strike. Strike organization was based in informal structures

within worker networks which were effectively utilized by the CAWIU. Day-to-day leadership came from Mexican communists, veterans of earlier strikes, labor contractors, crew leaders, and workers. Women activated female networks which became the organizational bases for gender-specific collective action.[31] Working with union organizers, these social networks provided an organizational framework that facilitated the creation of effective strategy and tactics.

By 1935 there was a dramatic shift in the work force from Mexican to Anglo-American migrants from the Southeast and Southwest. This shift raised questions about how this new group, with its own distinct historical, economic, and cultural identity, would respond to work in cotton. The response by these Anglo migrants emphasizes the need to look at the intersection of economic, cultural, and political factors. The Anglo migrants entered the work force during the Depression, the latest in a long line of refugees out of the depressed cotton areas of the Southeast and Southwest. Contemporaries viewed this migration as a direct result of the family farm's decline and argued that as citizens these migrants would challenge and change the agricultural system. But economic hardships sapped their material basis for security and tore the fabric of families and social networks. The problem was one of circumstance. The Depression enlarged the labor pool and depressed wages. Grinding poverty intensified a disintegration of their world which, while temporary, affected their sojourn as cotton workers in California. Their ability to rely on extended social networks was weakened by their tendency to migrate in smaller social groupings than Mexicans. And those who were new arrivals simply had not had the time to develop networks as extensive as those of the Mexicans who had preceded them.

Historians have debated the responses of these new Anglo migrants to unionization. Walter Stein persuasively argues that Anglo workers were less responsive to unions than were Mexicans. The qualities that contemporaries viewed as favorable to Anglo organization (that they were whites and citizens) undercut their solidarity with other workers. Anglo workers shared an ambivalent political heritage which intermingled populist hostility toward the rich with longings to belong to the propertied farmer class and be recognized as members of the white community. This undermined class cohesion and made it less likely that they would join unions. Ostracized as poor whites, they found an identification with the Anglo community as voting citizens.[32]

Yet, as James Gregory points out, Anglo responses were heterogeneous. Some had been influenced by populism or socialism and sup-

ported unions.[33] Examination of the *Bakersfield Californian* and other sources suggests that Anglo participation in unions rested on an established base of residents whose presence predated the Depression. Their longer residency and firmer roots facilitated the growth of progressive tendencies and the development of political and labor organizations that supported small farmers and farm workers.

The extent to which workers accepted the state as a vehicle for viable political expression affected conflicts in cotton. Overall, Mexicans had an ambivalent relation to the state. For non-U.S. citizens, the electoral process was simply not an option. Among citizens, while some looked to the New Deal for help, others found that personal experiences of exploitation, deportation, and racism undermined their expectations that the government would treat them benevolently. Anglo-American workers, however, came from areas where populist and socialist traditions had encouraged the transformation of the government through the ballot and had emphasized electoral politics over syndicalism. When and if they participated in attempts to change class relations, they did so increasingly within the arena of electoral politics. Anglo farmers and workers fought out the meaning of the New Deal, demanded protection from agricultural monopolists, urged relief reform, and took to the polls to cast their votes, first for Upton Sinclair and then for Culbert Olson. Their support strengthened labor's vote. Yet in relying on electoral politics they were placing their trust in a process that did not support farm workers' interests. Citizenship and white skin gave little protection from the deplorable conditions in the agricultural system and were ultimately more important in propelling them out of the fields than in changing the conditions in the fields.

This raises the question of the state's role in shaping economic and political conditions, and the nature of the interrelationship among the state, the cotton industry, and workers.[34] Scholars first explained the New Deal within the framework of democratic pluralism, in which interest groups competed within the government to form policy and programs that benefited the public good. Arthur Schlesinger, for example, lauded the New Deal for inhibiting employer repression of labor, improving working conditions, and welcoming workers and unions into the society and government.[35] Historians writing in the less benign years of the 1980s and 1990s have been more critical.[36] While David Montgomery, for example, agreed that New Deal policies and limited support for collective bargaining initially benefited industrial workers, ultimately, he argued, the relation between organized labor and government became

co-optive and evolved into a "restrictive quagmire" that curtailed workers' ability to organize and limited working-class participation to unions whose actions were sharply defined by the law.[37] Christopher Tomlins compellingly argued that by defining collective bargaining as an expression of public interest, the government denied federal support for unions to determine their own structure and activities. Although allowed to engage in collective bargaining, unions' actual ability to do so was subject to the "state's determination of how the public interest might be best served . . . [and] this would eventually come to mean in practice that the right to organize and bargain could be maintained only so far as the state conceived it to serve an overriding goal of industrial peace."[38]

But these writers ignore agricultural workers. As Theo Majka, Linda Majka, and Theda Skocpol have pointed out, for agricultural workers the effect of the New Deal was dramatically different. Excluded from protective legislation, their position declined precipitously, both absolutely and in relation to nonagricultural workers, in large part because of New Deal policies.[39] The problem was not only their omission from federal legislation. It was the constellation of New Deal programs and policies that institutionalized the position of agricultural workers.

Without a lengthy digression, a few words are in order about how this study defines the state and its relation to social classes. What I call the *state* is composed of branches of government at the local, state, and federal levels, including all government programs, agencies, and projects.[40] The state controls coercive mechanisms (such as the army and police), administers a given geographical territory, and finances its activities through taxes or loans.

I will argue that the state is shaped by class relations that emerged from industrial capitalism. The state apparatus reflects the heterogeneous nature of classes and the varying interests of capital and workers. Government agencies, programs, and policies become contested terrain between classes and often result in seemingly conflicting aims, programs, agencies, and personnel.[41] The state is neither a mechanistic instrument of the capitalist class nor completely autonomous.

The New Deal was the most important expansion of the role of the state in economic affairs in United States history to that point in time, and since then, inter- and intra-class relations have focused increasingly on the state. During the 1930s, federal programs were shaped by the need to facilitate capital accumulation, reproduce class relations, and maintain or reestablish hegemony. Reflecting conflicts of the period, government priorities were shaped by class alliances and conflicts as much as

by federal administration. Government policies and administration, agencies, and programs became battlefields for different sectors of society. Yet in responding to class pressures, the state redefined the parameters of relations between workers and capital. In so doing, the New Deal affected the overall balance of power between classes.

How was this played out in cotton? For a brief period the New Deal appeared to extend the possibility of restructuring class relations. Workers and their supporters fought over the definition and implementation of New Deal programs, legislation, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). Increasing government intervention spurred organizing by cotton interests, such as the Farm Bureau and the Associated Farmers, in order to form, influence, and administer policy and undermine unions. Small cotton farmers struggled with larger farmers over the policies of the AAA. Unions in agriculture, as in industry, shaped strategy around government programs and actions. And councils of the unemployed fought for their right to relief. Many factors influenced these battles: Roosevelt's reliance on the political clout of agricultural capital, especially Southern Democrats; the perennial weaknesses of agricultural labor and obstacles to labor organizing; and the effect of liberal reformers who refused to see the situation in class terms and envisioned the government acting as a form of neutral broker.

Previous works have focused on agricultural workers' exclusion from New Deal labor legislation. But a broader scope is needed to assess the overall impact of the New Deal on class relations in cotton. This book argues that the New Deal accentuated and institutionalized the power balance within the industry. The AAA enhanced the industry's economic control, indirectly subsidized anti-union elements, and, by helping propel southern tenants and sharecroppers into the wage-labor pool, contributed to the further disorganization of the California work force. The relative powerlessness of workers and the cotton industry's strength ultimately determined the direction of government programs. What respite the government offered came from relief and its housing programs. Relief to destitute migrants briefly threatened to establish a minimum wage and to replace collective bargaining as a mechanism to raise wages. Federal housing provided a potential base for unions and shelter free from the control of growers. Yet agricultural interests ultimately expropriated and utilized federal programs to their own advantage, influenced legislation, and stymied attempts to assist agricultural workers who were excluded from concessions to labor and social security in the 1930s and the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). By 1939, the New

Deal had promoted the centralization of power and concentration of control within the cotton industry, fueled the proletarianization of smaller farmers, and contributed to institutionalizing the relative powerlessness of farm workers.

This study focuses first on the development of the cotton industry, the growth of the work force, and the dialectical relationship between them. The first chapter shows that although the foundations of California's labor system were laid in the nineteenth century, the introduction of cotton changed labor demands sufficiently to propel the agricultural industry to increase control over workers. As cotton growing became increasingly specialized, that specialization increased the industry's vulnerability to market fluctuations and problems of labor distribution, leading growers to attempt to tighten control over workers by developing company towns, increasing supervision, and forming managerial hierarchies. But it also led to a transformation of employer-employee relations as recruitment and wages were centralized and standardized in the Agricultural Labor Bureau. The second chapter focuses on efforts by Mexican migrants, who formed the bulk of the work force, to create stability for themselves within an unstable labor system. It explores how the particularities of Mexican culture and family life and the experience of Mexican workers as laborers and participants in labor and social struggles affected labor relations on the cotton ranches. The third chapter deals with the 1933 cotton strike under the leadership of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union. The strike, shaped by the social structure of the cotton industry and the effects of changing class relations, marked a major transition. After 1933 federal intervention became increasingly decisive in class relations. The promises of the New Deal precipitated the strike, federal relief aided workers in maintaining it, and a federal mediator helped settle it. Yet despite hopes that the New Deal would extend its intervention in agriculture, the strike marked the furthest extension of federal power in support of agricultural workers.

The study then moves to examine the balance between workers and the industry established from 1933 to 1942. The fourth chapter examines the ways in which relief and housing programs, federal labor legislation, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act influenced class relations in cotton. The fifth chapter, focusing on the impact of new migrants on the cotton industry and its work force, explores how the background and experience of the white migrants who replaced Mexican workers by

1936 affected unionization efforts. Chapters six and seven examine the growing conflicts of 1937, 1938, and 1939 as the impact of federal policy in cotton became clear and class conflict became increasingly mediated through state programs. This process culminated in the cotton strike of 1938 and 1939, led by the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), which is the subject of chapter seven.

This study traces the development of the cotton industry, its work force, and its relations with the state in the years from 1919 to 1939. In doing so it brings agricultural workers within a larger historical paradigm and addresses issues of relationship among economic structure, human agency, and the state. The discussions about Mexican and Anglo workers and the role of communities, families, and women underscore the need to look at the broad spectrum of working-class life. In so doing, this book touches on issues that are historically relevant to the history of the United States' Southwest and of the Mexican community of this area. It also has implications for future relations among the growing Mexican population, the labor force, and the state.