

**On-Farm Apprenticeships: Labor Identities and Sociocultural Reproduction within
Alternative Agrifood Movements**

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ABSTRACT

On-farm apprenticeships are gaining momentum as an important strategy for beginning farmer training. They are also a space for identity work and rehearsal of alternative agrifood movement practice (AAMs; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Pilgeram, 2011). AAMs embody and recursively construct values of biophysical sustainability, food quality, egalitarianism, and agrarianism (Constance, Renard, & Rivera-Ferre; 2014). However, AAMs have been critiqued for disproportionately representing upper- to middle-class white cultural norms (Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007), for romanticized agrarian ideology (Carlisle, 2013), and for mechanisms reproductive of neoliberalism, which buttresses the dominant agrifood system (Guthman, 2008b). These AAM discourse elements are expressed in on-farm apprenticeships. On-farm apprenticeships are variably understood as beginning farmer training (Hamilton, 2011), as inexpensive farm labor (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Pilgeram, 2011), and as sites of tension between economic and non-economic attributes (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2016). I illuminate these dynamics within on-farm apprenticeships through the complementary theoretical lenses of cultural historical activity theory (Engeström, 1999), cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), and cultural identity theory (Hall, 1996). I employed critical ethnographic case study methodology to explore issues of power, social reproduction, and equity. I conducted 53 days of participant observation, worked alongside 19 apprentices on six farms for 37 days, conducted interviews (n=25), and completed document analysis (n=407). I observed white spaces and class-based work values re/produced, mediated by AAM discourse. Furthermore, I observed three distinct objectives within the activity system: (1) beginning farmer

training, (2) inexpensive labor for farms, and (3) an authentic farm lifestyle experience. In contrast to the first two, this third objective, the authentic lifestyle, resists market-based logics. Instead, logics that did govern behavior include: membership in a movement; an ascetic bent; the valorization of farmers and the authentic farm lifestyle; alignment with clean, healthy, and dirty parts of the job; and communitarianism. These logics point towards the creation of a third type of nonmarket/quasimarket space (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013). I describe several considerations for on-farm apprenticeship to lead to greater equity, reproduction of viable small farm labor models, and stabilized and legitimized nonmarket understandings of what makes on-farm apprenticeship function.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

On-farm apprenticeships are gaining momentum as an important strategy for beginning farmer training. They are also a space where people express and craft their identities as members of the alternative agrifood movement. Alternative agrifood movements promote the environment, food quality, egalitarianism, and agrarianism, but may be more culturally relevant for upper- to middle-class white social groups. They also promote romanticized notions of farming and agrarianism, while supporting neoliberal dogmatic approaches to social change. On-farm apprenticeships are treated as beginning farmer training, or cheap/free labor, and as sites of tension between economic and non-economic attributes. I examined this scenario using cultural historical activity theory, cognitive praxis, and cultural identity theory. With critical ethnographic case study methods, I conducted 53 days of participant observation, worked alongside 19 apprentices on six farms for 37 days, conducted 25 interviews, and examined 407 documents. I observed how whiteness and class-based work practices are being mediated by AAM discourses. Furthermore, I observed three distinct objectives for participants' involvement in on-farm apprenticeships: (1) beginning farmer training, (2) cheap labor for farms, and (3) having an authentic farm lifestyle experience. In contrast to the first two, this third objective, the authentic lifestyle, defies the rules of economics/neoliberalism. Instead, behavior appeared to be governed by: membership in a movement; an ascetic bent; the valorization of farmers and the authentic farm lifestyle; alignment with clean, healthy, and dirty parts of the job; and communitarian values. These rules point towards the creation of a nonmarket/quasimarket space. This study highlights how on-farm apprenticeship can be tweaked to promote greater equity,

reproduce viable small farm labor practices, and stabilize and legitimize a nonmarket understanding of the ins and outs of on-farm apprenticeships.

DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my “dissertation baby,” Serena Rose Saiorse, who accompanied me during my fieldwork (in utero), often slept soundly in my lap as I typed, and who has kept me laughing each day.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

On-farm apprenticeships can be understood as a significant way to train beginning farmers, but also as a significant labor force for small and beginning farmers. Beginning farmers on small, diversified farms increasingly employ strategies of volunteer labor, including on-farm apprenticeships, to meet their labor needs (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2016; Guthman, 2017; Hamilton, 2011; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Maxey, 2007; Niewolny & Lillard, 2010; Pilgeram, 2011; Wood, 2013). Farmers who host apprentices often view them primarily as a labor source, and therefore provide few learning experiences that are not directly necessary for completion of farm work (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Wood, 2013). Meeting labor needs can be a significant barrier for beginning farmers (Gillespie & Johnson, 2010; Ruhf, 2001), and volunteer labor, including on-farm apprenticeships, is occasionally presented as an inexpensive solution to local labor shortages for beginning farmers (Kalyuzhny, 2011; Terry, 2014).

There is a growing recognition of the need for greater attention to the ways in which beginning farmers are creating their own discourses and realities of farming, and to understand their diverse experiences as they undertake their farming activity. A programmatic response aimed towards beginning farmers has developed in the U.S. from grassroots, governmental, and higher education institutions (Niewolny & Lillard, 2010), especially as the current farmer population is quickly aging out of farming, and fewer beginning farmers are arriving to replace them (Ahearn, 2013). MacAuley and Niewolny (2016; see MacAuley, 2014, for the full report) find that apprentices constituted a significant labor force for small, diversified, direct marketing farms. They also found non-participation of low socioeconomic groups and issues of social

justice. The study also describes on-farm apprenticeships as sites of socioperformative identity work and social movement activity.

On-farm apprenticeships are embedded within social movement activity of alternative agrifood movements (AAMs; Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2016; Endres & Armstrong, 2013; Etmanski, 2012; Hamilton, 2011; Hetherington, 2005; Maxey, 2006; Pilgeram, 2011). Due to this embeddedness, on-farm apprenticeships are one site for political expressions within AAMs. AAMs, for example, are occasionally critiqued for their failure to adequately address structural inequities, especially inequity of race and class, thus producing and maintaining these inequities (Allen, 2004; Etmanski, 2012; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007) – a critique which may also apply to on-farm apprenticeship. On-farm apprentices are learning farming *in situ*, through working on the farm, and engaging in farmwork (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Wood, 2013). Yet, if on-farm apprenticeship practitioners are engaged in AAMs, these learning and labor experiences may be regarded differently than merely training or merely labor, because they see it as part of their cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), as part of their participation in a social movement (Endres & Armstrong, 2013; Hamilton, 2011; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016). If one's cognitive praxis causes learning and labor to be experienced in unexpected ways, implications for the outcomes of the apprenticeship activity abound. In such a case, a mismatch may arise between the express purpose and the outcomes of the activity. What does this potential multiplicity of objects for apprenticeship mean for the ultimate outcome? As an additional consideration within this research, there is evidence of mixed success in former apprentices who go on to start their own farms, with some host farms far more successful than others in this regard (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016). The issue is whether the educational purpose for beginning farmer training is being addressed by on-farm apprenticeship, if this is the case. In

order to unpack this issue, I critically examine the sociomaterial realities of farm labor within on-farm apprenticeship, and seek to understand how on-farm apprenticeship outcomes connect with the larger discourse of alternative agrifood.

If on-farm apprentices, and the farmer educators who host them, are affected by and embedded within the knowledge, practices, and social norms of AAMs (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016), then what guiding principles might participants express within their practice? AAMs offer a durable, consistent set of arguments that critically engage with the dominant food system. AAMs aim to improve agrifood systems to be (1) biophysically sustainable, (2) good for farming communities, (3) promoting healthy and quality food, and (4) emancipatory or socially just (Constance, Renard & Rivera-Ferre; 2014). AAMs have emancipation and social justice aims, notwithstanding what some authors claim as unexamined questions of inequity, particularly of race and class (Allen, 2004; 2008; Etmanski, 2012; Guthman, 2011; Lyson, 2004; Sbicca, 2012; Slocum, 2007). On-farm apprenticeship practitioners must navigate these interwoven discourses in their practice.

Although on-farm apprentices are a viable labor source for farmers who engage AAM discourses, farm labor within U.S. agriculture is generally populated by immigrant farm workers (Gray, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Luna, 2014). Elements of labor justice emerge within on-farm apprenticeships related to the wider, ongoing struggle of farm workers to gain worker protections (Norris, 2013). Within a larger framework of power relations, work and justice may be experienced differently for on-farm apprentices within alternative agrifood movements, and farmworkers more generally. Due to immigration statuses of farmworkers, they are seen to occupy a precarious position in the United States, which often leads to exploitation (Gray, 2013; Holmes, 2013). On-farm apprentices have generally greater mobility and choice than do

farmworkers, if taken as an occupational class (Guthman, 2017). While the low/no pay in exchange for on-the-job learning is the fundamental logic behind the apprenticeship arrangement (United States Department of Labor, 2015), it is also on shaky legal ground, with some calling for a specific exemption for on-farm apprenticeships (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzny, 2011). However, the simple legalization of the apprenticeship model in agriculture, if misapplied, could act to erode and compromise the legitimacy of farmworker protections, and the values set forth in past farmworker labor organizing (Guthman, 2017). Additionally, over-reliance on any form of volunteer labor leaves small, diversified farms vulnerable to shifting attitudes and availabilities of those who will work for low/no pay (Guthman, 2017; Pilgeram, 2011).

Experiential learning, or learning *in situ*, has been called the most important educational theory within on-farm apprenticeships (Parr & Trexler, 2011). Experiential learning can be generative of deep, emancipatory ways of knowing new skills (Lave, 1988). However, if experiential learning is unaccompanied by supplemental criticality and reflexivity, there is a risk the learner may not fully realize the potential, opportunity, and variety of what has been learned, and simply imitate what was seen or performed (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1986). For Giroux (1992), and Macedo (1994), all education efforts may socially reproduce hegemonic power structures, even within pedagogies with strong emancipatory potential such as on-farm apprenticeship. If education can be understood as a form of social reproduction, then on-farm apprenticeship can act as a powerful mode for reproduction.

On-farm apprenticeship is a site of social reproduction, and so risks the re/production of power inequity, and the re/creation of oppressive knowledge regimes. AAMs are mainly white spaces of the middle- to upper-class (Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2007). As Hall (1996) writes, individuals embrace signifiers of identity in identification processes to reproduce

distinct categories and difference. Does practitioners' cognitive praxis then alter these identification processes as part of the experiential learning taking place on farms, especially if AAMs are acting as ideological state apparatuses (ISAs; Althusser, 1970)? Could AAMs, as ISAs, continually reinforce and recreate dominant systems of power and class, and maintain the status quo, through on-farm apprenticeship? As an example, as Niewolny and Wilson (2007), and Lavin (2009; 2013) discuss, alternative agrifood is often framed simply as a "vote-with-your-dollar" approach to new forms of consumer spending habits (see Kingsolver, 2007; Pollan, 2006). This approach aligns with and is accommodated within the hegemonic capitalistic system (Brown & Getz, 2008a), which in turn unwittingly sanctions dominant systems of oppression.

In summary, on-farm apprentices are influenced by a shifting set of social constructions around identity, including sociocultural perceptions of agrifood and farm labor. Through the cultural work of education (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1994), social reproduction may be occurring that reproduces hegemonic constructions. This becomes especially problematic if clear power inequities are being reproduced, such as those surrounding race and class within AAMs and/or the dominant food system. In subsequent chapters, I elaborate on the intersection of the cognitive praxis within AAM activity, farm labor considerations, and mechanisms through which the apprenticeship experience may enact social reproduction of hegemonic power relations.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine how AAM participation affects learning and labor perceptions, and to understand social reproduction within on-farm apprenticeships. To address the complexity of the interaction between AAM discourse/praxis, cultural identity, farm labor, and social reproduction, I pose these questions:

1. What mediating sociomaterial tools and artifacts inform on-farm apprenticeship learning within this activity system?
2. How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system?
3. How does AAM discourse and technique articulate into sociomaterial outcomes in this activity system?
4. What are the social, cultural, and political implications of cognitive praxis and identification processes within this on-farm apprenticeship activity system?

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by three different bodies of theory, used complementarily in tandem in order to describe the complex phenomenon of on-farm apprenticeships. In order to adequately describe on-farm apprenticeships, I draw from elements of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT; Engeström, 1999; Fenwick Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011), cognitive praxis constructs from new social movement theory (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), and cultural identity theory (Hall, 1996). CHAT provides the primary foundation through which to examine how the sociomaterial mediates all activity within a network of actors in context. CHAT underscores how rules, tools, and division of labor impact the social interaction toward a common object, and contribute to an outcome of apprenticeship. Cognitive praxis constructs from new social movement theory provide a way to examine the collective movement identity formed within AAM discourse, including forms of knowledge and skills from AAM praxis, and helps me understand the outcomes of apprenticeship in relation to AAMs (Eyerman & Jamison, 1996). Cultural identity theory informs subjectification of participants, including how they negotiated forms of knowledge in power, and to describe identity politics at play (Hall, 1996; Foucault, 1984). More generally, use of critical theory (as understood within Carspecken, 1996; Fraser,

1989; Hall, 1997; Kincheloe, 2005; Macedo, 1994) within theoretical constructs in the case study was important in dissecting the hegemonic discourses within the cultural work of education and social movement activity, while lending an appropriately rich descriptive potency to the identity politics that emerged in the data. Taken together, this theoretical framework, a grafting together of constructs from several bodies of theory, backboned by CHAT, allows me a powerful lens through which to view this activity system and build understanding. In Chapter Three, I explain in greater detail each theory and construct individually, then emphasize how they may fit together in order to study on-farm apprenticeship activity.

Research Methodology

I employed methods from critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996) to conduct a critical ethnographic case study. A phenomenon must first be thickly described (Geertz, 1973) before it is theorized (McInerney, Walker, & Liem, 2011). By using ethnographic methods in a case study, I first created a detailed description of the on-farm apprentice phenomenon, and built on understanding of emergent themes. The unit of analysis consisted of an activity system of practitioners of on-farm apprenticeship (apprentices, farmer educators/hosts, educators and coordinators of educational programming, and all others present, within sociomaterial context), who are all in conversation with each other through joint participation in an educational program coordinated by an AAM-oriented agricultural organization. Data collection occurred throughout May to September of 2016. I conducted 53 days of participant observation, worked alongside 19 apprentices on 6 farms for 37 days, conducted interviews (n=25), and completed a document analysis (n=407). Data was analyzed through a semi-open coding process and analyzed for meaning using Greene's (2007) complementary strengths stance.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study presents itself in four areas: empirically within agrifood studies, politically as a farm labor consideration, methodologically as an example of how critical ethnographic case study may be employed, and theoretically to demonstrate how CHAT can act as a backbone to underscore sociomaterial aspects within the research. First, the study demonstrates empirically how the cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991) of AAM discourse is lived within a network of actors who are engaging in social interaction towards a common goal. As oppositional in stance to the hegemonic food system, AAMs create activity that seeks to create alternatives. In so doing, they are re/creating praxis that in itself may contain discourse elements that are counterproductive or generative of lasting social change. This dissertation research has illuminated specific ways that AAM discourse, as expressed in the life-worlds of system actors, both recreate and maintain hegemony, but also ways in which the discourse supports and embraces difference.

Second, recent legal scholars have called for a loosening of U.S. laws that pertain to on-farm apprenticeship (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzhny, 2011). However, these laws present worker protections that have been hard won through struggle and union organizing (UFW, 2011). This has led some to call for minimum wage to be afforded to all apprentices (Farm Commons, 2015; Marr, 2017). The findings of this study contribute to understanding market, nonmarket, and quasimarket rules that are acting to support and perpetuate the activity here. So, this dissertation research may inform policy by examining how apprentices, economic forces, and farm labor practices intersect, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the nuances surrounding the rules that act to govern this activity system.

Third, this study used critical ethnographic (Carspecken, 1996) case study (Bailey, 2007) methodology. This methodology yielded three datasets, from participant observation, interviews, and documents. Using Greene's (2007) complementary strengths stance in analysis, this methodology allowed me to examine different types of knowledge regimes within the activity system, and see how received knowledge differs from tacit knowledge, which differs from embodied knowledge, which differs from reified knowledge. This play, the boundaries between knowledge regimes, was a generative mode through which to see power in the activity system. The ethnographic case study methodology used here therefore serves as one example of a useful way to combine a critical stance within qualitative inquiry through use of multiple datasets, in a dissertation context.

Fourth, the interaction of theoretical frameworks allowed for various levels of knowledge regimes to appear within the research. CHAT yielded an emphasis on the sociomaterial, while cognitive praxis constructs examined AAM discourse elements, and cultural identity theory showed the suturing and interpellation of the body into signifiers. All of these together yielded a strong dimensionalization of how to communicate symbolic interactions throughout various levels of the activity system. Cultural identity theory, although constructivist in principle, uses individualistic and psychoanalytic language that makes it difficult to factor in materials and collective social constructions in describing identification processes. Through seeing the discursive and psychoanalytic constructs of cultural identity theory through the CHAT lens, the study allowed cultural identity theory a productive way to incorporate material elements into identification processes. Use of CHAT enabled a constructivist approach into considerations of identity, into which its own individualistic language hitherto has limited its progress (Hall, 1996).

Clarification of Terms

This dissertation research employs a number of specific terms. Here, I provide definitions for the sake of clarity. As this dissertation draws from discourses of agricultural education, agroecology, cultural studies, and education, incommensurable terminology is an ongoing challenge, as it is for many naturalistic social researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; McInerney, Walker, & Liem, 2011). Additionally, the participants themselves have shaped the use of terms within this study, since it is informed by lived experiences and construed meanings within this activity system. The below definitions therefore reflect not only discourse within scholarly literature, but discourse within the cognitive praxis of participants.

An *on-farm apprentice* is a novice to farming who works alongside, pitches in, observes and interacts with a farmer, with the goal of leading the novice to mastery in a the skills and knowledge of farming (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009). In this study, apprentices were considered adult actors who have an express arrangement with the farmer that they will learn farming while performing farm work. They may be called an ‘intern,’ ‘farm student,’ or another label, but for the sake of specificity, I use the term ‘apprentice.’ An *on-farm apprenticeship* is the arrangement and experience of hosting, teaching, and interacting with on-farm apprentices.

Alternative agrifood movements (AAMs) comprise a vast, multidimensional, interconnected array of various related social movements. For Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre (2014), AAMs are oppositional social movements to a dominant food system. They contend that AAM discourse can be dimensionalized in four parts. It critically engages with the dominant food system to improve agrifood to address: (1) biophysically sustainability, (2) agrarianism, (3) food quality, and (4) egalitarianism.

The United States Department of Agriculture defines *beginning farmers/ranchers* as farmers/ranchers who have been in operation ten years or less (Ahearn, 2013). However, as some have pointed out (Mills-Novoa, 2011; Niewolny & Lillard, 2010), this definition is problematic because it does not include those actively seeking farming as an occupation who are not yet principal owners/operators. Therefore, this study uses the term more broadly to include those who are exploring farming as an occupation, or are actively planning their own farm enterprise, in addition to those farmers/ranchers who have been in operation ten years or less.

Sustainability remains a contested concept with many meanings and articulations (Connelly, 2007), but is commonly understood to be present on small, diversified, direct marketing farms (Lyson, 2004). *Sustainable agriculture* is often understood as a set of biophysical practices, even reduced to a list of physical materials or inputs used on the farm, which reduces the discourses' ability to be an internally consistent ideology (Allen, 2004). Here, I treat it as a discourse, of which farms and individuals partake, and one in which the participants in this study frequently engage.

This study uses an *activity system* for its unit of analysis. An activity system is “the minimal unit of analysis for the understanding of cognitive development, human participation, and change... at its heart it affirms that all human practice is mediated by symbolic, cultural, and communal, as well as material, resources, or tools; it is through these forms of mediation that human practice is understood as both dynamic and historical” (Sawchuk, Duarte & Elhammoumi, 2006, p. 2). *Activity* is a term to refer to the entirety of social interaction within a body of relations that are mediated through sociomaterial and dialectical expressions, which comprises a “wholeness of thought” (Fenwick, Sawchuk, & Edwards, 2011, p. 64).

Cognitive praxis comprises the life and collective identity of a social movement. I here engage with the work of Eyerman and Jamison (1991), who define cognitive praxis as having three dimensions: cosmology, technique, and organization. Through looking at these dimensions, they say cognitive praxis becomes “social activity rather than aspects of thought... a living movement rather than disembodied forms of consciousness” (p. 70).

In this work, I understand *cultural identity theory* as Hall (1996) outlines it. Identity is understood here as an assemblage of different discursive responses to cultural narratives which may be oppositional, assimilative, negotiated, or any combination of these. For Hall, identity is dynamic and contextual, fluid, never fixed, never a completed project. Identity at its core is understood to be a never-ending process, a negotiation of symbols and meanings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a background and summary of relevant areas of literature in order to understand the subject matter for this dissertation research, and to suggest where this research may fit into the scholarly discourse. First, I briefly situate this study within scholarly research pertaining to on-farm apprenticeships. I then explain how on-farm apprenticeship is addressed within the ongoing beginning farmer conversation. I examine the cultural politics of on-farm apprenticeship, and then explore alternative agrifood movements, their discourse and praxis, and their critiques. I then explore how privilege affects social reproduction as it relates to work, which segues into a discussion of farm labor and social justice issues in our dominant agrifood system.

On-Farm Apprenticeship: Brief Overview

As the current farmer population ages out of farming, fewer beginning farmers are entering farming to replace them (Ahearn, 2013). On-farm apprenticeship has therefore been popularized as an important element for educational programming responses to meeting beginning farmer training needs in the United States (Niewolny & Lillard, 2011). Numbers of apprenticeships have been steadily increasing (ATTRA, 2017), with some calling for policy changes to encourage apprenticeship arrangements on farms (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzhny, 2011).

On-farm apprenticeship is often understood variably as both beginning farmer training for the apprentice, and a source of cheap or free labor for the farmer. On-farm apprentices typically perform essential farm labor, have an express agreement to learn farming, and may or may not be paid a small stipend (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Wood, 2013). On-farm apprentices are typically not from the farming community in which they work (see MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Pilgeram, 2011; Wood, 2013). MacAuley and Niewolny (2016), and Wood

(2013), have found preliminary evidence that farmers who host apprentices view them primarily as an inexpensive labor source.

Recent scholarship relates on-farm apprenticeship to agritourism and questions on-farm apprenticeships' solidarity with farmworkers (Guthman, 2017). For Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, and Dale (2016), there is a tension between the noneconomic elements within the apprenticeship model as a work-trade arrangement and the economic elements orienting apprentices and farmers. Ekers and Levkoe (2017) see structural barriers to accessing on-farm apprenticeship for marginalized groups, including rurality of spaces and financial stability needed to engage in the activity. They also report on farm viability problems with the arrangement related to costs and risks of hosting apprenticeship. Some have therefore concluded that apprenticeships, as a model, relates to the rise of precarious work and the historical undervaluing of farm labor, including labor of women and children on farms (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2016; Guthman, 2017; Pilgeram, 2011; Weiler, Otero, & Wittman, 2016). On-farm apprenticeship has been said to be a morally framed response within AAM discourse to broad issues linked to farm work generally (Weiler, Otero, & Wittman, 2016).

On-farm Apprenticeships within the Beginning Farmer Discourse

Beginning farmers are nothing new (Rasmussen, 1989), but initiatives to educate and prepare them for farming are growing in importance (Ahearn, 2013; Niewolny & Lillard, 2010). Beginning farmers are emerging as a distinct group with unique educational needs (Trede & Whitaker, 1998). On average, beginning farmers have smaller farms, depend more on off-farm income, and earn less income, even controlling for farm size (Ahearn, 2013). They are also increasingly diverse, and increasingly from a non-farming background (Meuleners, 2013; Meyer, Hunter, Katchova, Lovett, Thilmany, Sullins & Card, 2011). As the Government Accountability

Office (GAO; 2007) reports that the USDA is taking steps to recognize the need for beginning farmers and establish programs to enhance their viability in agriculture. According to the GAO, “beginning farmers are younger than established farmers, operate smaller farms, and are slightly more ethnically diverse and female than other farmers” (p. 5). A body of programming and policies from public, private, and civil society sectors is rising to meet these unique challenges faced by beginning farmers (Niewolny & Lillard, 2010; Sureshwaran & Ritchie, 2011).

On-farm apprenticeships are recognized as both ways to learn about farming and food production and to gain more generalized knowledge about agriculture. Practitioners and many scholars consider the scheme a promising approach for those who aspire to be farmers to receive training to become farmers, particularly within alternative agrifood discourses (Carey, Kelly, Hendrickson, Nagengast, Quinn, Volland, & Kumar, 2006; Maxey, 2006; Pilgeram, 2011). As Jarosz (2000) states:

On-farm apprenticeship programs are... examples of cooperative alliances bridging industrial and sustainable production practices that deserve more detailed empirical examination. Apprenticeships provide those interested in production and food networks first hand knowledge in the operation of either industrial or alternative agriculture. They are useful for university students who are researching food networks in social science curriculums. They provide both employment and learning opportunities for apprentices and aspiring producers, as well as labor and teaching and mentoring opportunities for farmers. These activities serve to strengthen and sustain local agri-food networks (p. 281).

Apprenticeships are also spaces in which actors perform and negotiate identification processes (Hall, 1996) which may be marked by power discourses (Bourdieu, 1984). This educational model serves as an important, and politicized, part of the programming response to meet beginning farmer educational needs (Niewolny & Lillard, 2011).

On-farm apprenticeships are sites of experiential learning (Biernbaum, Thorp & Ngouajio, 2006; Leis, Whittington, Bennet & Kleinhenz, 2011; Parr & Van Horn, 2006; Ratasky,

2012; Shroeder, Creamer, Linker, Mueller & Rzewnicki, 2006), offering an in/non-formalized way to learn farming. Apprenticeships, in which a novice learns side by side with a more knowledgeable person and pitches in (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009) constitutes participation in an activity system, where learning and cognition take place through meaningful symbolic mediation in social activity (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011). So, due to the social, historical, and contextual nature of the learning experience, on-farm apprenticeship enables learners to gain access to farming knowledge systems and negotiate forms of identities as agrarians.

The Cultural Politics of On-Farm Apprenticeship Education

Educators, by the very nature of their work, are engaged in a political act (Fenwick, 2003). Their position as educators makes them uniquely placed in society to act as sustaining or transforming society, as well as creating effects of empowerment – and disempowerment – of youth and adults (Giroux, 1992; Freire, 1970). If education constitutes cultural work, there are deep sociocultural implications in deciding which/whose knowledge is sanctioned through education (Fanon, 1961/2004; Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2005; Macedo, 1994).

The issue with the transmission of culture from the education system is that powerful interests can utilize the institution in order to perform this cultural work of indoctrination, and subdue dissenting voices (Gaventa, 1982; Kincheloe, 2005). Noam Chomsky is clear that in his view, an elite business class responded to democratizing social movements in the 1960s to 1970s, which included politically influencing curriculum and structures within formal education in the U.S. (Nyks, Hutchison, & Scott, 2015). As Connolly (2013b) puts it, neoliberalism makes “demands upon the state to engineer the preconditions of existence for neoliberal power” (p. 11). Carr, Plum, and Howard (2015), see problems with commodification of the U.S. dominant forms of education, which, when viewed through the lens of economic theory, has the hidden

politicized goal of “extraction of surplus value through labor” (p. 7). They argue the education system has come to embrace its primary purpose as job training (versus empowerment of social change leaders, or preparation of informed citizen participants in democracy, for example). Their analysis showed a widespread belief among educators and citizens that the purpose of education is to improve means of production, both by providing trained laborers, but also through academic research and development. Thus, dominant models of education are complicit in social reproduction, serving primarily those who own the means of production.

This argument is further elaborated by Gautreaux (2015), who analyzed discourse in educational news and publications, to find the neoliberal discourse legitimized, the discourse centered around the “defaming of American public education guided by neoliberal capitalist principles to have education serve the demands of the global economy” (p. 13). Within this climate, the role of educators is reduced to, as Freire (1970) might say, a functional transmitter of isolated facts that make up the official canon, unattached to learner’s knowledge, values, or beliefs. Kincheloe (2005) describes the role of educators within this hegemonic discourse as: “relegated to a static state of being, teachers in this technicist paradigm are conceived as a unit of production of an assembly line – historically abstracted selves located outside of a wider social context... we become beings constructed by others – our actions are manipulated to serve their interests” (pp. 88-89).

In this system, a hidden curriculum serves to silence and marginalize dissenting voices through discipline and to delegitimize knowledge regimes by making visible only the knowledge that is functionally important for ‘entering the workforce,’ and marginalizing low-income and minority groups (Anyon 1980; Bourdieu, 1984). Giroux (1983) is careful to point out that these colonizing forces also apply to white, middle- to upper-class learners. In this way, educators are

cultural workers, although their role as such has been popularly forgotten and uncelebrated. Due, in part, to this massive forgetting, our educational system has been usurped by dominant economic interests whose use of the state educational system a type of workforce training program has become a largely unexamined tradition of educators' professional practice (Gautreaux, 2015). As Fenwick (2003) reminds us, "if we find ourselves 'learning' to become competent in achieving values of continuous consumption, wealth accumulation, middle class norms of dress, speech, family, home, privacy, and entertainment, we help to reproduce a system that endows these ideals with cultural capital" (p. 32).

As scholars, then, it becomes imperative to engage with the hegemonic forms of education in order to understand how cultural politics are being expressed, what may be reproduced or transformed through the education process. For Giroux (1992), "the challenge that post-colonialism presents to educators and cultural workers calls for new ideas, pedagogical strategies, and social movements capable of constructing a politics of difference within critical public cultures forged in the struggle to deepen and extend the promise of radical and cultural democracy" (p. 21). It calls for systems of education that are empowering and liberating. Freire's (1970) central project is in describing a critical pedagogy, which is a conceptualization of education that resists and denies hegemonic forces' role in dictating the terms of education (Macedo, 1994). Within Freirian critical pedagogy, the education system functions more as a facilitator of learning, rather than a top-down instructional force of knowledge transmission. Freire calls this activity a "permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (p. 68), not education or action *for* or *to*, but *with*. The criticality of critical pedagogy comes from the critical – the skeptical – perspective of which theories should be embraced in a democratic education, careful of the theories that reinforce the status quo of oppressive conditions. This criticality

limits the co-optation of education as a means of socially reproducing the means of production systems, for the benefit of dominant classes (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). In this way, critical theorists of education call for a system of learning that promotes justice, equality, dialogue, and empowerment.

As Giroux (1983) argues, there are few parts of Western society that have been left unmarked by the signifiers of a colonizing/indoctrinating approach to education. On-farm apprenticeship is a model that ostensibly is enacted as in/nonformal adult education, since adult learners work alongside expert farmers for a tenured duration, where there is an express agreement that the apprentice will learn to farm ‘on the job.’ Because apprenticeship learning involves close social interaction with an expert farmer, Freirian dialogue and critical pedagogical processes are possibilities, but not guaranteed. Learning from experience on the farm, while it is a constructivist model of learning (Kincheloe, 2005), can also simply re/produce the status quo if it is not accompanied by reflexivity and generative openings of possibility (Dewey, 1986; Freire, 2005). So, when done uncritically, even learning from experience, as in an apprenticeship, can be unconsciously re/productive of hegemonic power relations.

Because the farmer educator may view the apprentice more as an inexpensive source of labor than as learner (Pilgeram, 2011; Wood, 2013), a farmer-laborer relationship could develop into an oppressively paternalistic arrangement (Gray, 2013). The micropolitics on the farm may be non-egalitarian, or marginalizing, where farm labor roles are racialized and/or classed (Holmes, 2013). So, in considering on-farm apprenticeship learning, one must note the potential, in real terms, for reproduction of dominant knowledge regimes and systems of oppression.

This re/production is inherent in many forms of knowledge construction. Fanon (1961/2004) explains how many types of learning experiences may lead to social re/production that perpetuates inequity:

In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes passed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order” (pp. 3-4).

Fanon equates education to other social processes, which produce and reproduce hegemonic power relations. Fanon’s deployment of these descriptions as means of re/production is elaborated by Althusser’s (1970) ideological state apparatus (ISA), in which institutions (consciously or not) work to spread the ideas and capacities needed for each member of society to fulfill their niche within the reigning social hierarchy. The idea of education as cultural work does not separate intentional (formal and/or nonformal) education schemes from other means of diffusing dominant narratives into society.

These ideas are also informed by Foucault’s (1984) concept of knowledge-power, in which no knowledge exists outside of power relations, since all knowledge is constructed based on valorization and legitimation of knowledge through power relations. Foucault explains how knowledge-power can be constructed through self-discipline and the creation of norms within power relations. He says of the system of discipline and punishment in our society:

It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of individuals. It introduces, through this ‘value-giving’ measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved...The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized education and the establishment of *coles normales* (teachers/ training colleges) (1977, pp. 183-184).

So Foucault has similar impressions of education as a normalizing force in teaching through standardization. This coercive force aids the cultural work of education and the social reproduction of systems of oppression therein.

Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus provides one conceptualization of an informal mechanism for social reproduction. Bourdieu linked cultural practices with educational capital and, more importantly, social origin, in order to arrive at the construct of habitus. Habitus is "one manifestation of the system of dispositions produced by the social conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence when they take the paradoxical form of the greatest freedom conceivable, at a given moment, with respect to the constraints of economic necessity" (p. 49). Class habitus, in essence, comprises the knowledge, skills, tastes, and preferences appropriate to one's class, and reproduces itself from generation to generation. Class habitus leads to certain types of cultural capital, available only to members of a group with shared characteristics and circumstances. For Costa and Murphy (2015), "habitus is socialised subjectivity that agents embody both individually and collectively, through the interrelationships they establish in the social spaces to which they belong. Habitus encapsulates social action through dispositions and can be broadly explained as the evolving process through which individuals act, think, perceive and approach the world and their role in it. Habitus thus denotes a way of being" (p. 7). Habitus informs and produces tastes and preferences (for food, for jobs, etc.), ways appropriate to one's social background. Although it is not 'defined' by essentialized divisions of difference such as race, class, and gender, often these divisions are ways in which habitus is interpreted. AAM discourse becomes a site for habitus to be performed and reinforced, which has implications for on-farm apprenticeship activity.

We often have little choice but to communicate in the modernistic language of the oppressors, which tends toward unitized, one-dimensional, sometimes violent renderings of human experience (Freire, 1970; Fanon, 1961/2004, hooks, 1994). As hooks writes, use of language in the academy often excludes emphasis of building meaning-in-practice, and also valorizes and overly legitimizes white male dominated theoretical language, which leads theory to become less useful for people in practice who cannot access such theoretical language. For Giroux (1992), “within such polarities there is little room for understanding the points of resistance, multiplicities, complicities, oppressions, and liberating elements that undermine all binary oppositions” (p. 24). Giroux continues, “language itself can be used to shut down partiality, possibilities, and a politics of representation that is central to the construction of multiple social identities, public cultures, and forms of political practice” (p. 25). Language and other markings of discourses can be understood, in part, through the lens of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism places emphasis on the “complexities of the social construction of identity, on everyday life, on small groups – and their meaning making and cultural innovation – as well as on culturally and linguistically sensitive field research” (Long, 1997, p. 5). It is this co-construction and use of symbols that can limit or expand educational possibilities.

Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs)

A mobilization effort is underway devoted to revolutionizing our food and agriculture systems through alternative agrifood movements (AAMs; Allen, 2004). AAMs comprise a vast, multidimensional, interconnected array of various related oppositional social movements (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014), that promote sustainable agriculture, food security, community food security, food sovereignty, and food justice. They are also critiqued for

whiteness, localism, romanticized agrarianism/nostalgia, and reproduction of neoliberal paradigms. This section reviews the discourse/praxis and the critique.

AAM Discourse and Cognitive Praxis Overview

Alternative agrifood movements (AAMs) have been growing in response to what has been called a “legitimacy crisis” (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014, p. 15) in the dominant globalized agrifood system. The dominant agrifood system has been critiqued at the farm level for being input-heavy and mechanized; at the distribution level for being overly centralized; and at the society level for contributing to rural social degradation and health epidemics such as obesity and diabetes (Carolan, 2012). In response, as an oppositional movement, Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre (2014) have argued that the discourses of AAMs are encompassed within four major topical domains: the environment, agrarian communities, quality food, and emancipation. The environmental concerns probe the biophysical sustainability of our current food system. The AAM discourse also addresses the agrarian question, of how rural communities fit into capital and how to perform rural development. AAM discourses have also explored the ability of the existing system to produce nutritious, healthful food. Finally, those seeking to change existing organization and practices have offered conceptions of what might constitute a more emancipatory and socially just food system.

The alternative agrifood discourse holds values of “social, economic, and environmental justice and health, democratic participation, the importance of local wisdom, local dreams, community spirit, and often [commitment] to spiritual traditions” (Feenstra, 2002, p. 105). As Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson (1996) put forward, local control of food is one way to confront the powerful distant forces that control food systems. These advocates and the discourse they offer are rooted in an “anti-oppression ideology premised on notions of social

justice and autonomy” (Sbicca, 2012, p. 464). AAMs have multiple aims that necessitate a reworking of many of the supporting dominant structures of the food system, from production, to processing, to distribution, to ultimate consumption.

AAMs meet Snow and Soule’s (2010) criteria to be considered a social movement, in that they are oppositional/alternative to hegemonic structures, collective, organized, outside other institutionalized structures (such as the state), and have a unified, durable, and continuous common discourse. Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre (2014) call AAMs the “vanguard social movement of our time” (p. 4). AAMs may be defined as many multifaceted, related social movements. AAMs may be discussed as multiple movements, as Allen (2004) does when she analyzes AAMs as two distinct movements, the “sustainable agriculture movement” and the “community food security movement” (p. 32). The multiplicity of AAMs is tied together in overlapping, related discourses that equate to a unified entity of shared values, knowledge and practices – the “alternative” to the dominant agrifood system (Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012; Guphill, et al, 2013; Sbicca, 2012).

AAM discourses often drive towards an imagined future, under five main ideas, each of which describe an ideal future vision with varying treatments of social justice: sustainable agriculture, food security, community food security, food sovereignty, and food justice. *Sustainable agriculture*, it must be said, has many definitions and interpretations (often a balancing act between social, environmental, and economic factors), so has relatively little explanatory power for social justice considerations (Connelly, 2007; Feenstra, 2002; also see Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996). *Food security*, however, is a measure of access to food. According to the United Nations (U.N., 2015), “people are considered food secure when they have available access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy

and active life” (para. 1). Hamm and Bellows (2003), however, complicate this household-level view of food security, asking us to look more broadly at *community food security*, which incorporates considerations of social justice. Abi-Nader, et al., (2007) use participatory, values-based decision-making to examine community food security through factors of justice and fairness, strong communities, vibrant farms, healthy people, sustainable ecosystems, and thriving local economies. Within these dimensions, social justice becomes more visible.

Food sovereignty, as a newer concept, describes a vision of the future where a population or community has control over the means of food production, and food is determined to be a basic human right (Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013). This construct points to a process more than outcomes, and allows individuals and communities to distinctly illuminate democratic principles of justice within the agrifood system in open, participatory dialogue with the least visible faces and quietest voices. Additionally, focusing on food sovereignty allows us to see inequities of power relations in food production and consumption. *Food justice*, as part of food sovereignty, problematizes race and class elements of the agrifood system (Alkon & Agyemen, 2011). It calls for critical analysis to drive towards equitable distribution of power within production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food. The difference between these five constructs demonstrates the breadth of the discourse in various AAMs, and shows recent discourse drawing towards a more equitable, holistic, and critical approach to our agrifood system.

AAMs place value on a particular types and forms of food from particular places. AAMs have values of health and nutrition, ecologically sustainable agriculture, and food that is considered to be tasteful and high-quality (Lavin, 2013). Many within this discourse associate health and nutrition with fresh, raw vegetables and other products associated with historically

imagined farming (eggs, milk, etc.), bought from a local green grocer or farmers markets from sustainable farms (Guptill, Copelton & Lucal, 2013). Within AAMs, certain foods are valued, while a whole host of other foods are devalued (Guthman, 2007). The food that is valued within AAMs has historical roots within cultural contexts (Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013).

Influential, best-selling food authors Pollan (2006); Kingsolver (2007); and Zinzenko and Goulding (2008) have tried to popularize a diet of fruits and vegetables, eschewing foods that are highly transformed/processed, packaged, and distributed. Because food taste embodies a cultural taste, markers of status and privilege are inherent within the food (Bourdieu, 1984; Guthman, 2003).

Sustainable agriculture is an all-encompassing term which is often recalled within AAM discourses (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014). While sustainable agriculture is a contested concept (Connelly, 2007) most sustainability authors speak mainly of sustainable farms as small in scale, with a diversified set of products, and with localized and flexible marketing strategies (Lyson, 2004). Often, these sustainable farms have particular practices that require fewer chemical and off-farm inputs, so they are considered more biophysically sustainable (Connelly, 2007; Lyson, 2004). The localization of food economies is “often understood to be a pathway to greater environmental sustainability and stronger economic viability” (Hinrichs, Allen, & Melcarek, p. 532). So, the AAM discourse often values food produced in “sustainable” and “local” places over food produced in other places.

Localism has popularly been emphasized as a way to make the food system more just, because social interactions locally can put faces on issues, as in the slogan, “know your farmer” (Pollan, 2006; Sbicca, 2015b). Local food is primarily a response to the globalized food system, not only to ‘reduce food miles,’ but also in forming local food policy, through food policy

councils or other local governance, with a ‘think globally, act locally’ motive (Kloppenber, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996). Proponents emphasize the idea that justice and emancipation are more easily attained by engaging in local resistance to the faceless global forces that dominate the agrifood system.

Voluntary certification schemes continue to be a solution put forward by AAM participants (Brown & Getz, 2008a, Guthman, 2008b). Voluntary certification entails a private business or commercial corporate entity voluntarily meeting specific criteria or standards in order to be certified as such, as in organic certifications, and fair trade agreements (Allen, 2004; Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013). The idea is that consumers will reward products with the certification by purchasing it. As an example of voluntary certification, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ (CIW) *Fair Food* campaign has received attention in literature about food justice (Allen, 2008; Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014), and acclaim (Burkhalter, 2012). Their *Fair Food* campaign asks large restaurants and food retailers to sign an agreement that they only buy from farmers who pay a small amount more per pound of tomatoes (CIW, 2017).

AAMs have varying strains in the discourse, often related, and occasionally conflicting (for example, valorizing reductionist science-based knowledge, yet value placed on traditional ways of knowing). AAMs also have several broad-sweeping critiques, which I will explain in the following sections. Critiques of AAMs mentioned here center around whiteness and uncritical localism, neoliberal solutionism, and improper use of voluntary certification schemes.

Whiteness and Localism

Scholars have critiqued AAMs’ prevalent whiteness (Allen, 2004; 2008; Guthman, 2008a; Lyson, 2004; Sbicca, 2012; Slocum, 2007). These authors note that AAMs not only have

a high proportion of white participants, but also put forward a normative set of knowledges and practices that encompass white, middle- to upper-class culture, beliefs, and values. For example, this cultural whiteness can be seen in the cultural food that is offered as ‘good food’ (Guthman, 2003; Guptill, et al, 2013), but also the spaces and cultural practices of the ‘know your farmer’ idea (Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007). Guptill, et al, (2013) points out “the zeal with which white activists celebrate their own definition of good food reflects a tendency of members of dominant social groups to assume that their own values and perspectives are universal” (pp. 175-176).

For example, the food of AAM discourse, as cultural expressions, has a large bearing on whom is being referenced as the ‘subjects’ of AAMs (Guthman, 2011). When Zinczenko and Goulding, in their best-selling book *Eat This, Not That!*, tell us to eat every day; spinach, yogurt, tomatoes, carrots, blueberries, black beans, walnuts, and oats (p. 2-5); they ask eaters to embrace particular cultural expressions through food. This food, valued within the AAM discourse for its health benefits, and arguably its ability to be purchased locally, is nonetheless laden with layers of cultural meaning that may not be appropriate across diverse cultural traditions. Guthman (2004; 2008; 2011) and Slocum (2007) would argue that the color-blindness of the advice given about food, because it declares to be objective through nutrition science, sidesteps any substantial conversation about what healthful food means within other cultural contexts, and the lack of inclusion of other cultural traditions.

The construct of localism has had its detractors, as well. Allen (2010) points out that there are no guarantees that local means more socially just, as micropolitics may be equally, or even more so, oppressive. As Hinrichs (2003) argues, the ‘know your farmer’ logic does not mean economic incentives do not drive decisions, and also, localism could promote an indirect,

exclusionary ‘othering’ of things not perceived as the ideal-type of local, such as ideas from elsewhere, or even minorities or immigrants. She also points out that local politics are often reproductive of the same inequities that social justice initiatives try to address. For Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman (2012), the emphasis on local governance inadvertently ignores global and national politics, which potentially reduces power of the state, as it accepts the federal legislation in exchange for greater control over local matters.

Hinrichs, Allen, and Melcarek (2011) write that localism is often seen as the primary organizing focus for alternative agrifood work. For DuPuis, Harrison, and Goodman (2011), localism involves inherent equity issues. They point out that local food activists, who valorize local authority over the food system, may incidentally over-simplify power and control. Localized decision-making about food may reinforce power imbalances, and occasionally buttress systems of oppression. These power dynamics are often invisible or ignored. DuPuis, Harrison, and Goodman offer the concept of reflexive localism, in order to complicate the ideal of local control, while retaining the inherent value of localism as a “powerful strategy for resisting the alienating, disabling, and unsustainable features of increasingly globalized food systems” (p. 293). Reflexive localism calls for local forms of control to be one part of the strategy to improve the food system, not a panacea. Hinrichs (2003) points out that localization often involves the reinforcement of negative sentiment towards outsiders, which can work against social justice aims. According to Hinrichs, Allen, and Melcarek (2011), “buying local food is perhaps less commonly seen as furthering (or needing to further) social justice” (p. 532).

The localization of the food system, for these authors, distracts from larger aims of AAMs. Critics of localism suggest that local solutions should be seen as important, yet not as a

panacea. Local solutions should be implemented with periodic reflection on all local factors (social, political, and cultural) with social justice aims firmly in mind (Allen, 2010).

Romanticized Agrarianism and Nostalgia

One millstone constraining alternative agrifood movements is the (re)production of agrarian values through an emphasis on an idealized past, as epitomized in popular food literature and aesthetics (see for example, Berry, 2009; Kingsolver, 2007; Pollan, 2006). The agrarian question in AAMs asks how food systems can better improve life for farming communities (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014). Hajdik (2011) argues that “modern realities of industrialized agriculture have sparked a desire for highly romanticized visions of farming” (p. 8). Our collective agrarian past provides a backdrop for reflection in agrifood system, but this history was rife with institutionalized racism, and the kind of entrepreneurialistic dominance over nature that created the Dust Bowl (Carlisle, 2013). So the summoning of the images of an idyllic agrarian past may be counterproductive to other aims of AAMs, such as social justice and biophysical sustainability (Carlisle, 2013; Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013; Hinrichs, 2003). Uncritical agrarianism could also lead to a search for “technological panacea” (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014, p. 14) which has led to “unacceptable externalities for rural peoples” (Constance, Renard, and Rivera-Ferre, 2014, p. 14).

Agrarianism is a complex ideological construction that places value on idyllic rural communities that show rugged individualism, communitarian work, hospitality, spiritual uprightness, bravery, and manliness (Inge, 1969). Much has been made of agrarianism within AAMs, premised on both real and imagined accounts of ideal-type, old-fashioned farming communities. For example, popular author Wendell Berry (2009), devotes one chapter of his recent book *Bringing it to the Table* to highlight farmers, all male, who farm in a way similar to

how they would have fifty or more years ago. The cover of the book uses Grant Wood's 1934 classic Americana painting, *Dinner for Threshers*, which shows fourteen white males in blue jean overalls sitting at a table, while three white women in long skirts and aprons are seen in the kitchen, serving the men dishes from a wood stove. This type of imaginary has implications for how AAM participants identify and how they engage politically.

For Autio, Collins, Wahlen, and Anttila, (2013), AAMs perpetuate a connection to agrifood that is culturally significant, historicized in place, and nostalgic. In their words, AAM participants “connected with authenticity in the sense that the past is glorified... which then leads to a *nostalgia* for the real – a fascination and desperate search for real people and real values” (p. 568). They see the value on authenticity and nostalgia as a part of romanticized versions of agrarianism. Guthman (2014), critiquing the cultural conservatism of Berry and others, calls these elements of the agrarian ideal in AAMs “strikingly anachronistic and misplaced” (p. 209). She points out that within AAMs, agrarianism can often engender values of “family values and tradition” (p. 208) and emphasize “patriarchal and heteronormative arrangements” (p. 209). These values are antithema to social justice aims of AAMs.

Many have pointed out the danger of romanticizing the past, highlighting the inherent dominance of whiteness in past agrarian histories (Allen, 2008; Allen & Sachs; 2013; Guthman, 2008a, 2014), and the power, privilege, and property of the white male farmer identity (Carlisle, 2013; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007). Green, Green and Kleiner (2011) concur, and sum up the issue in their history of African Americans within U.S. agriculture thusly: “the narrative of black farmers shows greater details of the transitions that have taken place, and may help keep us from being overly romantic about the past...it is not a matter of going back to the days of yesteryear, for how can a system based on slavery and sharecropping be considered idyllic?” (p. 60). For

them, recalling the history of struggle and oppression of black farmers “may help keep us from being overly romantic about the past” (p. 60).

The focus on the romanticized agrarian ideal-type small family farm has perpetuated the myth of ruggedly individualistic (white, male) farmer, who does the farm work, while omitting the presence of other workers from the imaginary (Guthman, 2014; Lavin, 2013). As Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, and Dale (2016) state:

The rise of nonwaged work on ecologically oriented farms is no aberration but rather reflects a history of non-commodified labor on farms. It is our contention that, despite this enduring phenomenon of non-waged agricultural work, current trends reflect a contemporary manifestation of the agrarian question in which interns, apprentices, and volunteers represent a source of non-commodified labor (p. 1).

Guthman (2014) argues that this reliance on apprentices for farm work amounts to a subsidy within sustainability-oriented farms.

Hired labor, in turn, occupies relatively little place in AAM discourse (Brown & Getz, 2008b). The agrarian imaginary shifts our gaze away from the structural and symbolic violence done to farmworkers (Holmes, 2013). Holmes suggests that this perpetuation of romanticized notions of agrarian life amounts to a “collective bad faith” (p. 87), causing labor issues to be downplayed within AAMs. Green, Green and Kleiner (2011) argue that rather than a romanticized notion of agrarianism, AAMs should instead seek to create future structures with a value firmly affixed on social justice and equality.

With this consideration in mind, Carlisle (2013) offers “critical agrarianism” (p. 135), as an alternative way of thinking. Critical agrarianism neither romanticizes nor downplays the effects of (inequitable) histories on agrifood, but includes the idea that moralities of both rural life and urban life are incomplete, so neither should be valorized unquestioningly. She also points out that uncritical rural agrarianism may emphasize unsustainable conventions of practice

that value individualism over collectivism, and/or inadvertently promote reproduction of agrarian or non-agrarian race and gender identities. She then outlines five dimensions, or key considerations, with which to evaluate agrifood system elements: rural/urban valorization, questioning biophysical conventions, conventions of individualism/collectivism and their interaction with other ideologies, egalitarian racial identities, and egalitarian gender identities. She stresses that open dialogue concerning these considerations will make each more visible and prominent in efforts aimed at attaining greater social justice in agriculture.

Reproduction of Neoliberalist Assumptions

AAMs aim for an idealized future in which communities are food secure, food sovereign, and just. However, entrenched, dominant power structures are invested in the inequality that stems out of the current neoliberal regime (Fraser, 1989, Gaventa, 1982, Harvey, 2005). Market-based solutions abound in AAMs (Constance, et al, 2014). Guthman (2008) writes that four elements of typical AAM work act to express and reinforce neoliberal values: primacy of consumer choice, localism, entrepreneurialism (or, the “use of market mechanisms to solve problems;” p. 1177), and the use of foodways as self-improvement. Niewolny and Wilson (2007), in their discourse analysis of a local community within an AAM, have also argued that the language of the neoliberal agenda has dominated the discourse concerning alternative agrifood. Hinrichs and Allen (2008) have analyzed selective patronage campaigns, such as the *Buy Local*, *Buy Union*, *Buy Black*, and *Buy American* campaigns. They point out that “each selective patronage campaign represents a response to features of capitalism deemed unacceptable” (p. 339), but supports the fundamental tenets of capitalism to produce desirable social ends. This focus further accommodates and strengthens the underlying power structures that create the inequity (see also Brown & Getz, 2008b; Lavin, 2009).

AAM work also often echoes the anti-state sentiment of neoliberalism. Guthman (2008b) writes that the food movement has been “remarkably anti-statist” (p. 1180), and that many AAM participants believe that “change can be accomplished outside of the state” (p. 1175). Lavin (2013) furthers this point when he says, “skepticism toward institutionalized politics informs a retreat from the one institution traditionally capable of (if only periodically interested in) resisting capital concentration: the state” (p. 107). Lavin critiques AAMs for their emphasis on consumer choice, and laments that if, as Guthman (2008b) says, “today, it is eating decisions themselves that are seen as politics” (p. 1175), it is due in part to a sense of impotence in civic and social life. For Lavin, “because the locavore literature is dismissive of state action while remaining curiously silent on the issue of wage labor, it seems less anarchist than neoliberal” (p. 107). By shrinking the centrality of policy and governance, and the state, one accommodates neoliberalist dogma.

The vote-with-your-dollar approach is touted by popular AAM food authors (as represented by Kingsolver, 2007; Pollan, 2006; Zinczenko & Goulding, 2008), who are concerned mainly with the consumption of food, and the contents of food to be consumed. This causes much of the labor involved in food production, processing, distributing, and marketing before its acquisition by consumers to be hidden from view (Allen, 2008; Holmes, 2013). What is visible is often a tokenized version of agrarian livelihoods that obscure any meaningful understanding of food production (see, for example, Berry, 2009). As nutrition-minded and health conscious individuals are told to eat particular types of food, there is often little, if any, consideration for the politics behind the production of that food, especially for labor concerns (Allen, 2008; Guthman, 2003; Holmes, 2013). The experience of food is often understood as an individualistic enterprise, collapsed into only the parts seen, known, and therefore individually

controlled (Lavin, 2009). Thus, the AAM discourse, as represented by popular food authors, is highly focused on consumption, and does not often consider production and farmworker labor.

Some argue that the AAM lacks sufficient language with which to address food issues, because it is embedded in the North American political neoliberal regime (Lavin, 2013; Brown & Getz, 2008a). Lavin (2009) points out that Pollan (2006), who has emerged as a popular champion of alternative agrifood, advises readers that the best strategy to realize the alternative agrifood system is to modify consumer spending habits. Lavin contends that this approach is popular precisely because it fits well within our hegemonic narratives of neoliberal capitalism, with its emphasis on the primacy of the market forces to govern society. Niewolny and Wilson (2007), in their discourse analysis of a local community within an AAM, have also argued that the language of the neoliberal agenda frequently dominates the discourse concerning alternative agrifood.

Neoliberalism is also often seen as the background of conditions within which ‘solutions’ must be invented and implemented, rather than a malleable framework of conditions that must themselves be altered. Allen (2008) writes that micropolitics of AAM work often devolves into the “politics of the possible” (p. 159), whereby no solution is considered that does not seem immediately feasible within the current socioeconomic climate (read: immediately palatable to lay audiences and funders). As Fraser (1989) writes, often oppositional social movements are engrossed more in what she terms “needs talk” (p. 291), where the demands for needs remain overly specific (perceived as more ‘attainable’ goals), rather than becoming demands for a restructuring of a socioeconomic system that creates such undesirable societal impacts and inequities, more fundamentally. Harvey (2005) offers that in order to challenge the neoliberalization of public discourse, a debate about the primacy of what constitutes rights, and

freedoms, must ensue (p. 182). For Guptill, et al, (2013), “we cannot simply shop our way to a new food system” (p. 176). The ‘vote with your dollar’ approach overlooks the fact that those with more dollars get more votes. If consumer choice is the most important mechanism for social change, then the mechanism acts as a structural barrier to participation by racial and ethnic minorities, who reside structurally on the lower side of a widening income gap (Kochlar & Fry, 2014).

Voluntary certification schemes, such as organic certification and fair trade, are one type of market-based solution based in politicized consumerism (Constance, et al, 2014). This approach to social justice re/produces neoliberal assumptions in that it stresses the primacy of the market to solve social ills, and free, informed consumer choice (Brown & Getz, 2008a; Guthman, 2008), and the false promise of corporate good will (Banerjee, 2008). In short, these voluntary certification schemes are fundamentally flawed in that they reinforce the neoliberal values that create social injustice in the first place. So, while localism and voluntary certification schemes are two of AAM’s main responses to social justice concerns, a deeper look reveals that they must be rethought if social justice aims are to be met.

AAMs must lift their gaze to begin to view as changeable the structures of production themselves (capitalism in its current form), and also the ideological paradigms that reproduce the conditions of production (neoliberalist mindsets). For Patel (2013a), by focusing on food sovereignty, we embrace a framework that is clearly antithema to neoliberalism, in that they counter the primacy of liberalized trade and market forces, and suggest a more central role of the state. Patel explains how food sovereignty addresses and curtails neoliberal agendas:

People could eat well only if their governments were free to adopt policies that supported domestic production and consumption. Food sovereignty was a demand not only to disconnect from the circuits of global food trade, but also to behave more democratically in the production and distribution of food within countries... Food sovereignty might be

something that cannot be given - only asserted... But governments ought also to imagine how they might take back their food sovereignty from a multilateral system that increasingly denies it (para. 8).

Constance, et al., (2014) have analyzed global North and South AAMs, and find a distinction between the two. As they summarize: “in the global South the movements have more a radical/oppositional focus, while in the North the focus is more alternative/progressive” (p. 313). They go on to point out that the global North must embrace some of its radical/oppositional features in order to retain its transformational power, and suggest learning from Southern groups such as Brazil’s Landless Worker Movement (MST). In light of this, Holt-Gimenez (2011) adds that *food security* is a focus of the progressive-minded, while *food justice* and *food sovereignty* are the focus of the radical and oppositional. Therefore, we can derive from these authors that a focus on food justice and food sovereignty will orient our thinking more towards a radical/oppositional approach. In this focus, AAMs may keep in visible view Marx’s (1867, 1848/1967) conditions of production, the structure of capitalist neoliberal agenda, which feature the continued dominance of hegemonic power structures. In this approach, market-based solutions are downplayed, and policy and governance are once again important tools of the people to craft an agrifood system that promotes social justice and farm labor rights.

Social justice implications abound for on-farm apprenticeship and farm labor. Alternative agrifood, if it is framed simply as new forms of consumer spending habits (as in Katz, 2008; Kingsolver, 2007; Pollan, 2006), is well accommodated and assimilated within the hegemonic capitalistic system, and is therefore reproductive of dominant systems of production and capital accumulation. Cultural whiteness and agrarian ideologies within AAM discourse tend to make farm labor less visible. Also, neoliberally dominated public discourses tend to be seen as structural conditions to work within (Allen, 2010), rather than the conditions themselves that

must be challenged. As Allen (2008) points out, academia may play a role in promoting social justice by examining the epistemology behind discourses and “making the invisible visible” (p. 159). So, by deploying Carlisle’s (2013) critical agrarianism, and by focusing on food justice and food sovereignty in AAM work, AAMs may yet realize their oppositional and transformative potency.

As Allen (2008) writes, “everyone – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or social class – eats. We are all involved and we are all implicated” (p. 159). Alternative agrifood has emerged as a social movement, on par with the feminist and civil rights movements, as an oppositional body of theories, practices, and discourses that challenge the dominant agrifood institutions (Allen, 2004, 2008). For Allen (2004), “discourse is what forms and maintains social identity” (p. 6) in AAMs. Food and agriculture systems may thus be appropriate settings in which to evaluate power structures, and examine how social justice considerations relate to labor, capital, and social reproduction in the context of on-farm apprentices and farmworkers.

Privilege, Work, and Social Reproduction

As discussed above, because an on-farm apprenticeship is a form of experiential learning (Parr & Trexler, 2011), implications abound for social re/production within on-farm apprenticeships. For example, the food that is more highly valued within AAMs may provide an expression of one’s privilege through the “finer tastes” associated with that food. Bourdieu (1984) offers us a model with which we might view how the power relations may be expressed within on-farm apprenticeships, and AAMs, more generally. He says of class habitus, “one must return to the practice-unifying and practice-generating principle, i.e., the class habitus, the internalised form of the class condition and of the conditionings it entails” (p. 101). Habitus is

expressed through one's taste in food, among tastes and preferences in other categories.

Bourdieu elaborates on this when he says:

Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits. The antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition—linked to different distances from necessity—between the taste of necessity, which favours the most 'filling' and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function. (p.7)

Tastes and preferences for food may also include the origins of the food, as an intertwined value within AAM discourse, and is linked to middle- to upper-class society (Guthman, 2003). These food preferences including food origin are expressed within the cultural vocabulary (Simon, 2011).

Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus also has implications for the types of employment sought and considered acceptable by participants in AAMs. For example, on-farm apprentices, along the lines of their class habitus, may seek employment in a position that is more in line with their class. The physical labor of a farmer or farmworker may be less accessible, but an on-farm apprentice may be able to identify more readily with professions such as local food activist, promotional worker, nonprofit professional, or work and school in academia. Bourdieu might predict, in accordance with class habitus conditioning, on-farm apprentices may continue to work within AAMs, but without engaging in the physical labor of the farmer. A job that involves daily physical labor (including the low pay, commitment to rural home setting, etc.) must be negotiated within their social habitus. Hetherington (2005) notes, of organic farmers he observed in Nova Scotia, that they attempt to reject the status markers of their affluent socioeconomic backgrounds, but nonetheless their ethical constructs and behaviors belie their class habitus. This

sets them apart from other multi-generational farmers, their neighbors, with whom they share a similar income level, and lifestyle. The class habitus is not expressed monetarily, but in sociocultural attributes.

Billet (2005) argues that social reproduction does not self-replicate perfectly – individuals have agency that is often unappreciated in discussions of social reproduction, as Hall (1996) also argues. Because this reproduction is imperfect, mobility can and does occur. On-farm apprentices, who are disproportionately white, middle- to upper-class, and college educated (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016), decide to act in ways that their social habitus would not predict, in that they enter a position of manual labor.

However, in applying Bourdieu's notions of class habitus, questions arise as to the essentialist nature of class, or other essentialized divisions of identity. Some point out that these views give socioeconomic status markers primacy (Costa & Murphy, 2015; Lamont, 1992). Lamont downplays the significance of symbolic boundaries and calls into question the assumption of closed social networks within which individuals develop collective repertoires, suggesting instead that the process of identification is more dynamic, open to renegotiation and reinterpretation. Given Lamont's critique, Bourdieu's class habitus must be considered more as one determinant among many other cultural contributions to describe activity. Torlina (2011) and Lamont both find that working class values and perceptions of work differ, in broad terms, from that of the professionalized middle class. Yet, it is possible that actors gain exposure to the others' value sets and ways of thinking, and so recursively renegotiate new identities and meanings within context. Work identities are more fluid and dynamic, as one's identity work plays out in complex ways.

Identity is therefore best understood as a performance, where “the production and reproduction of society thus has to be treated as a skilled performance on the part of its members, not as merely a mechanical series of processes” (Giddens, 2013, p. 168). For Giddens, actors may be unaware of their skills, outcomes, etc. Hall (1996) understands identity to be a dynamic and continual form of identification, which he defines as “constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (p. 2).

Althusser also understood identity as socially constructed. In his view, “people are recruited into identity positions by being interpellated or hailed. This is a process by which people recognize themselves in a particular identity and think, ‘that’s me.’ Ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects (Joseph, 2006, p. 74). For Althusser, identity requires an ideology, and that ideology is largely reproductive of structures required for production (hence, ISAs). As Brookfield (2001) states: “ideology thus becomes less a clearly identifiable system of ideas and more a participation in actions, social games, and rituals that are themselves ideologically determined” (p. 15). Hence, within this vision, identity is constructed often only in relation to systems of production in a capitalistic system.

Marx (1848/1967) wrote of the social reproduction that occurred to perpetuate class distinctions. He writes, “society as a whole is splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat” (p. 3). If we see the on-farm apprenticeship phenomenon through the Marx’s lens of the two great camps, we might understand the petit bourgeoisie to be the small farmers, and the haute bourgeoisie to be the apprentices (for Marx, the ruling class), the professionalized middle- to upper-class. However,

Marxist's economically reductionist categories of class are less explanatory in this system, and might be better if deconstructed and reimagined to understand class as discursive identity practice (Gibson-Graham, 1996).

Social reproduction perpetuates power relations that accommodate needs of the elite while appropriating and marginalizing dissenting voices, but it requires maintenance. As Harvey (2005) and others (for example, Gibson-Graham, 1996; Hall, 1996) describe, the perpetuation of the power structures inherent in late capitalism has required a consistent reinforcement of neoliberal principles. Sandel (2012) characterizes this as “the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong” (p. 7). He goes on to say “the reach of markets, and market-oriented thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the most significant developments of our time” (p. 7). Fanon (1965/2004) and Marx (1848/1967) considered a populist uprising the only path to true reform, but Gibson-Graham (1996) provides for us a language that resists the “overdetermination” (p. 27) of structuralist political economy. In Gibson-Graham's view, it is embracing an ontology of opening and possibility outside of the dominant narrative, a “landscape of economic difference” (p. 21) and new “class processes” (p. 23). Sandel offers that we need “public debate about what it means to keep markets in their place” (p. 7). These authors remind us of the limits of the appropriate application of neoliberal dogma, and point to possibilities for transformation by disrupting, eroding, and altering the dominant systems of power. They also remind us to avoid essentialized categorizations of difference, and understand that identity is socially constructed, dynamic, overlapping, discursive, and non-deterministic.

Race as a theoretical construct is often treated as a deterministic, inert, biological factor. Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi (2008) write that race is a social construct that is not biologically

determined. They detail the history of the forming of racial constructs, showing how “White logic and White methods shape the production of racial knowledge” (p. 23). As hooks (1993) points out, race is complex and people can be interpellated into assuming race-appropriate positions while at the same time resisting those positions. Even one’s individual racial identity is not a fixed set of attributes. Following Hall (1996), race cannot be taken as an entire, intact ‘unit’ of identity that is either present or absent. Instead, I understand race as a constructed assemblage of different discursive elements that are constantly sutured together through socioperformative practice. That said, these social constructions are signified and made visible through durable material realities (Gooding-Williams, 1998). As Gooding-Williams states: “one becomes a black person by, and only by, acting under certain descriptions” (p. 243). He goes on to state that race is a “performance of discursively shaped actions” (p. 243), an amalgamation of identity signifiers, whether conscious or not. In the words of Alcoff (1999), “visible difference, which is materially present even if its meanings are not, can be used to signify or provide purported access to a subjectivity” (p. 279). Race, therefore, is a multifaceted construction that is nevertheless culturally significant.

Class and race consciousnesses are atypical white behavior in society (Allen, 2008; Guthman, 2011; Harper, 2011; Slocum, 2006). As Harper points out, “‘good whites’ tend to shy away from antiracism and reflections on white and class privilege within alternative food movements” (p. 221). As explained previously, on-farm apprenticeships may be socially reproductive of discourse elements within AAMs, and could therefore produce and maintain space for whiteness and/or unexamined expressions of privilege (Allen, 2008; Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013; Guthman, 2004; 2008; 2011; Harper, 2011; Slocum, 2007). Actors may use

privilege and power relations to valorize certain types of knowledge and claim space within the activity system.

Sociocultural narratives thus inform identity practices. Althusser's (1970) ideological state apparatus (ISA) acts as mechanisms to inscribe and interpellate actors into roles and to replicate social conditions, in order to recreate dominant systems of power, and generally maintain the status quo. ISAs represent "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions" (p. 6). ISAs, as opposed to repressive state apparatuses (police, jails, legal system, etc.) carry forward ideological frameworks through which societal norms replicate.

The social construction of a 'work ethic' is one such condition that is generatively reproductive of the structural means of production, and may reproduce through ISAs. Examining the work ethic may also allow insights into expressions of identity in on-farm apprenticeships.

As Beder (2000) explains:

Gramsci used the term 'hegemony' to describe the phenomenon by which the majority of people accept the values and political axioms that ensure their own subordination to the ruling elite. This hegemony is not stable and requires constant reinforcement. Reinforcement occurs through social conditioning, aided by leading social institutions, as well as the rejection and marginalisation of those who propose radical change. It requires promotion of the virtues of the existing system and the denigration of alternatives as unworkable, disastrous, undesirable (p. 262).

Beder (2000) details the historical roots of the work ethic, which, far from a naturally emerging value of modernist society, traces back to careful, intentional efforts by powerful individuals, early capitalists and factory owners, the churches and religions, to transnational corporations in the 1940s-2000s. In its current form, the work ethic assures that "work provides identity in terms of class and status within an established occupational hierarchy" (p. 125). "Work is imbued with a moral value through an emphasis on responsibility and contribution" (p. 188). Additionally,

Beder demonstrates that a federal initiative was launched since the 1980s to ensure corporate-education partnership, in which a liberal education was downplayed, and the work ethic is instilled through the public education system. This work ethic is universally applied across modern work forces, and justifies long hours and harder work in most facets of modern day industrialized work (Tokumitsu, 2014).

For Beder (2000), the working class is subjected to harsh working conditions and power imbalances that are created through the structures, environment, and culture of work due to the social reproduction of a value placed on hard work. For Weber (1904/2002), however, hard work was considered pious religious practice. Torlina (2011) also points out nuanced perceptions of work, as he states: “for the variety of blue-collar workers... work is a source of pride and satisfaction. For middle-class professionals on the other hand, blue-collar work is shameful. It is seen as simple, subservient, and alienating” (p. 179). Torlina argues that a trend towards the “devaluation of physical work” (p. 188) has had deleterious effects. He says working class culture carries values of dignity placed in one’s work and a sense of ownership over the work, even as ‘white collar’ workers view the work with contempt.

Simpson, Slutskaya, Lewis, and Hopfl (2011) write that upper to middle classes follow “avoidance rules” (p. 3) in order to stay separated from lower classes who perform manual labor. They state “occupations which deal with polluting, physical dirt are carried out by members of lower classes who are separated spatially and socially from other groups” (p. 3). Ehrenreich (1989) points out that what she terms the ‘professionalized middle class’ is highly conscious to display signs that they are part of the class, to distinguish themselves from manual laborers of the working class. For Waldinger and Lichter (2003) the social stigma attached to many types of

jobs is one factor creating a pull for workers and driving migration into the U.S., and farm work is a prime example.

Within manual labor trades, Simpson, et al (2011), argue, “taint, dirt, and prestige are intimately connected to powerful social identity categories such as gender, race, class, and nationality” (p. 5).

Bourdieu (1984, 1990) conceives of a working class habitus based on attitudes and values that are ‘anchored’ on the body and which form a ‘mark’ of social position and social difference—where that social location inculcates a set of tastes and perceptions (Bourdieu 1990). The body is both a materialisation of class and reveals the ‘deepest dispositions’ of the habitus where working class bodies often carry symbolic value through strength and physical competence. Social conditions and dominant power relations of the ‘field’ therefore produce lived traditions, practices and values where, as Charlesworth (2000) highlights, the ‘realization of a life course’ and feelings of constraint in terms of what is seen as possible or achievable come to be framed...through the habitus and determined in part by socialisation and earlier experiences, certain dispositions for action are ‘stamped’ onto our bodies, for example, through gesture, movement and comportment. (Simpson, Hughes, Slutskaya, 2016, p. 8)

They therefore argue that those who undertake manual labor “dirty work” are aware of their taint, and negotiate their identities toward social validation, dignity, and to “recast the work in affirmative terms” (p. 9). They do so in many ways, including embracing the dirt or taint, and/or focusing on clean or healthful aspects of the job.

Narratives of work create and sustain racialized spaces, as well. Lamont (1997) empirical research addresses racialized moralities surrounding work. He argues that among manual labor trades, black workers’ ethics of morality in the workplace included much more of a spirit of communitarianism and solidarity with other workers, whereas white workers placed more value on individualism, bettering oneself, and getting ahead. He writes that “whites are much more successful at giving their own definition of morality dignity in the workplace” (p. 273). White

cultural narratives of work ethic are also mediated through AAMs, and their attendant visions and meanings of farm work.

Meanings of work and identity negotiation may also create boundaries that exclude other actors present in rural spaces. Hetherington (2005) has noted of his own research of organic farmers in Nova Scotia that they tended to be “from elsewhere,” positing as examples “American Buddhists,” “romantics,” and “political activists” (p. 27). He says that “organic growers I got to know come primarily from urban, middle-class, and professional settings” (p. 46). He points out that the habitus associated with their backgrounds “manifest themselves in the present as differences in lifestyles, tastes, and political dispositions” (p.46). For Hetherington, to understand the decisions made everyday by farmers within the “organic community” (p. 45) one must understand that they practice “asceticism of the privileged” (p. 56). In other words, they undertake a project of remaking themselves, which means to “distance them[selves] from material abundance” (p. 56). Hetherington points out that “the people practising these lifestyles have, in fact, the choice to do so. It is precisely this ‘freedom’ to experiment with one’s own body, money, diet, possessions, the choice to live in poverty, to reject material goods, pleasures and status markers... that makes theirs a ‘taste of luxury’” (p. 57). The class markers, therefore, are often paradoxically related to the denial of luxury.

In Elgin’s (1981) popular nonfiction book, *Voluntary Simplicity*, he reports results on a survey of those who report to espouse principles of voluntary simplicity, which bears some similarity to asceticism in that it asks individuals to forego material goods. He says most practitioners of voluntary simplicity are white, college educated, and from relatively affluent backgrounds. He points out that “those whose childhood experience has been that of poverty are much less likely to become forerunners in choosing a way of life that they may perceive to be a

perpetuation of that poverty” (p. 25). Brown and Kasser (2005) have found that voluntary simplicity behaviors correlate to values placed on ecological sustainability, which would create space for alignment with AAM discourse.

Stark (2003), using religion to frame a discussion of asceticism, makes the point that “it is the opportunity to choose poverty – a choice not given to the poor – that seem central to the appeal of asceticism. Fasting seems not to appeal to people who have often been hungry and privation in general fails to attract the poor.” (p. 7). He notes “The ascetic impulse is more prevalent among persons of privilege... peasants are starving, not fasting. Deprivation is asceticism only when it is voluntary and that does tend to limit it to those with the privilege... of choice” (p. 16). So, the compulsion to undertake farm work, which is manual labor viewed as “below” the class-based expectations of work of the majority of AAM practitioners, deserves further exploration.

This self-denial of the luxuries of one’s privilege and power relations has occurred throughout history, from Diogenes to Thoreau to Ghandi. Even Marie Antoinette had *Petit Trianon*, a working rustic village built on the edge of Versailles’ palace grounds, to feed the ducks and churn butter (Castle, 1992). Brooks (2010) has attempted to explain the crossover from privilege into working class, through coining the term *bobos*, meaning bourgeois-bohemian, attempting to explain the paradox of privileged individuals who intentionally live lifestyles associated with lower socioeconomic status. Gray (2013), in her examination of labor within AAMs, notes that farm labor is often viewed in the same light as the “noble savage” (p. 26) within AAMs. The noble savage mindset may loom large for apprentices who seek a cultural experience in tune with their own class-appropriate ethical constructs. Privileged perspectives may shape attitudes towards manual labor, informed as they are by moralities and identities.

These questions have deep implications for the future of on-farm apprenticeships and AAMs overall. Because on-farm apprentices are typically white, middle- to upper-class individuals, is their motivation to engage in physical labor evidence of a power disruption, a form of mobility, or of something else? How are they interpreting their farm work activity through the lens of their own social habitus?

Farm Labor Issues

Since on-farm apprenticeship is used as an inexpensive labor force, it is important to understand the problematics of how farm labor is typically carried out on farms across the U.S. Farmworkers are a marginalized and exploited group in the U.S. Farmworkers belong to an occupational group with high rates of poverty (United Farm Workers [UFW], 2011), accident, injury, and death (Hansen & Donohoe, 2003). They often have health problems, many of which go undiagnosed, or untreated (Holmes, 2013). On large farms that employ many farmworkers, compliance with health and safety regulations is poor, or regulations are not enforced (Guptill, et al, 2013; Hansen & Donohoe, 2003; UFW, 2011). Farmworkers' average life expectancy is 49 years, compared to 75 years in the general U.S. population (Hansen & Donohoe, 2003).

U.S. policy has further compounded issues for farmworkers. While exact numbers are unknown, it is estimated that 95% of farmworkers are foreign-born and a majority are undocumented (Allen, 2010). Many advocates argue that farmworkers' undocumented status "puts them in a weak bargaining position with respect to wages and working conditions" (Shreck, Getz & Feenstra, 2006, p. 441). As Brown and Getz (2008a) point out, immigration policy in the last three decades has focused mainly on enforcement and deportation, which has had the effect of giving employers a state-sponsored vehicle to effectively disappear

farmworkers who ask hard questions of their employers (seeking to organize for better working conditions, for example).

Also, institutionalized racism has been a force within agricultural labor law (Allen, 2008; Guptill, et al, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Rohan, 2015). As Molina (2014) states, “racial scripts endure, both as cultural representations and as built into institutional structures and practices” (p. 7). In his ethnography of a U.S. farmworker population, Holmes (2013) finds distinct, lived expressions of structural inequities, structural racism in border policy, and structural racism in agricultural labor law. For example, farmworkers are exempted from wage and benefit protections under the federal *Fair Labor Standards Act* (UFW, 2011). When surveyed, they rank low wages first among their difficulties, since a majority are paid less than minimum wage (Shreck, Getz & Feenstra, 2006; USDA-ERS, 2016). Also, between 50-75% of farmworkers are employed by farm labor contractors, who have high incidence of wage theft and even forced labor (UFW, 2011). H-2A guestworkers are also subject to labor trafficking (Lichtenstein, 2006). Farmworkers are not granted collective bargaining rights, nor workers’ compensation (UFW, 2011).

Lack of citizenship for U.S. farmworkers makes them officially unwelcome on U.S. soil, yet we depend on this labor force to work the soil and secure our food supply. These workers are therefore an integrated and important part of the U.S. agrifood system. Although farm labor issues are gaining increasing visibility and traction within AAM literature (Allen, 2008; Carolan, 2012; Guptill, et al, 2013; Holmes, 2014; Jenkins & Gutierrez, 2013; Rohan, 2012; Sbicca, 2014), even in some popular literature (e.g., Estabrook, 2012; Patel, 2013b), the recent political climate has compounded immigration issues, which further compounds farmworker vulnerability (Collingwood, Reny, & Valenzuela, 2017). It is therefore continually vital to engage in the

farmworker dialogue to create social justice for farmworkers and to create stability for the U.S. agricultural labor force.

Farm labor is historically a complex ideological assemblage. Farm work has been historically romanticized by dominant narratives (Weber, 1904/2002). However, when farmers and laborers have engaged in political action they have been violently suppressed, as in the United States' agrarian revolt in the 1880s and 1890s (Goodwyn, 1978) and in the historic action of the United Farm Workers in the western U.S. in the 1960s (Ganz, 2009; Norris, 2013). In the United States, slavery of African Americans, followed by a history of sharecropping, followed by exclusionary land access structures, also adds to a collective identification crisis with farming and farm work by marginalized groups (Green, Green, & Kleiner, 2011). When taken with the historic and currently active structural racism of Latino farm workers (Luna, 2014), a complex picture emerges of the social constructions surrounding farm work as an occupational class.

Agricultural labor laws exist to protect agricultural workers. These worker protections have been hard won through decades of farmworker struggle, organizing, and collective bargaining with farmer owner operators (Ganz, 2009; Norris, 2013). Agricultural labor laws are, however, often critiqued as inappropriate for small, diversified farms due to their simplistic "one-size-fits-all" approach (Endres & Armstrong, 2013; Hamilton, 2011). It is increasingly recognized that these laws are inappropriately applied to on-farm apprenticeships and internships, as they are often practiced on small, diversified farms (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzhny, 2011). Some report that on-farm apprenticeships may often follow the practice of paying a stipend that is often less than minimum wage, and/or may not provide housing in accordance with farm worker housing standards (Endres & Armstrong, 2013; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016). As Jones (1999) and others (Blum, 1991) write, the education received is often considered in-

kind payment to account for the low wages and other working conditions, such as long hours and substandard housing. However, legal instruments are often insufficient to reflect educational benefits as in-kind payment (Farm Commons, 2015).

For Hamilton (2011) and Kalyuzhny (2011), beginning farmer education is a vital endeavor, as agriculture continues to experience a rising average age and fewer beginning farmers enter farming each year (Ahearn, 2013). In light of this need to smooth the transition into farming, they offer recommendations to precipitate a more permissive legal climate for on-farm apprenticeships. Endres and Armstrong (2013) make similar arguments for volunteer labor on farms that participate in community supported agriculture. More volunteer labor arrangements, including on-farm apprenticeships are emerging on farms each year (ATTRA, 2015a; 2015b), and yet labor law is complex, which means small farmers (who often do not employ farm managers or human resources personnel) are often uninformed of compliance standards, and/or unaware that they are in noncompliance (Farm Commons, 2015). This complicated legal situation has prompted many agricultural service providers, such as Carolina Farm Stewards and Farm Commons, to host workshops and webinars to discuss legal compliance issues for apprentices and interns (see, for example, Farm Commons, 2015).

Agricultural labor law is a complicated legal area that has been the subject of struggle, unionizing, and agitation, where advances have been hard-won. Farmworker justice made advances with the formation of the United Farmworkers Union (UFW) by Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta in 1962. The grape boycotts of 1965-1966 drew national attention, which led to the right to organize and bargain collectively through the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (Norris, 2013). The right to collectively bargain, and the issues that were raised, led to the establishment of other federal farmworker protections, such as establishment of pay and housing

standards. More recently, the Coalition of Immokolee Workers led a successful campaign for a modest increase in piece rate pay, and other protections, such as shade structures and water, in the tomato fields in the Southeast (Romer, 2014).

Despite these advances, the situations of U.S. farmworkers remains troubled. Lack of minimum wage and hour standards, low job security, and poor safety standards, including pesticide exposure and heat stress risks, continue to be common in U.S. agricultural fields (UFW, 2011). Continuing application of pesticides, etc., on fields where farmworkers are working currently or shortly thereafter, brings huge health risks and burdens, and workers have only had modest success in achieving protections in several states (Holmes, 2013). Many migrant farmworkers are undocumented, which leads to further vulnerability to abuses, since they can be easily deported (Holmes, 2013). Federal law continues to deny farmworkers the protections needed to unionize and collectively bargain in most states (UFW, 2011).

Holmes (2013) found distinct, lived expressions of structural inequities, and structural racism through his ethnographic work within a migrant farmworker population between Oaxaca, Mexico, and Washington State in the United States. He notes racial segregation on the farm, where indigenous Mexicans from Oaxaca are given the most difficult jobs, which leads to ill health effects and social reproduction of other issues (e.g., poverty, overt racism on farms, etc.). He suggests that to correct such “collective bad faith” (p. 87) within AAMs, movement discourses must address institutionalized, policy-level structures that lead to these inequities. On *prima facie*, farmworkers, from an economists’ perspective, are entering voluntarily into a contractual agreement. However, this viewpoint fails to recognize the reality that labor is controlled with power asymmetry and often hidden agendas of the powerful (Fraser, 1989).

Circumstances surrounding agricultural labor continue to evolve. A stricter enforcement of border immigration law, along with anti-drug trafficking law at the border, make agricultural jobs that much less secure (Holmes, 2013). According to Martin and Taylor (2013), due to increased demand for labor-intensive, ‘healthy’ farm products (such as fruits, vegetables, and horticultural products), “there is evidence that the supply of [migrant] farm labor in the region [Western United States] is decreasing and that, in the future, farmers throughout the region will find themselves competing for a dwindling number of local farm workers” (p. 1).

AAM discourses often fail to engage these farmworker issues. Allen (2008) points out that farmworkers are often forgotten in the alternative agrifood picture. Guthman (2003) records one instance of a coalition of organic farmers who fought against the banning of the use of the short-handled hoe, which places undue strain on farmworkers’ backs. Sbicca (2015) writes of the complex interplay that maintains racialized stereotypes within organic farmers in California, such as the cultural meme that “migrant labor should be cheap” (p. 2). Small farms are exempt from many of the minimum wage and hour standards that larger farms must heed (UFW, 2011).

Sustainability-oriented farmers often see apprentices as an inexpensive labor source. Pilgeram (2011) finds that apprentices on small, sustainability-oriented farms may depend on the labor provided by apprentices. Host farmers said increased production is a main benefit of hosting interns (Carey, et al, 2006). As Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, and Dale (2016) argue, on-farm apprenticeship is a continuation of the historical devaluation of farm labor, including work performed by farm family members, and since farmers tend to value their own family’s labor much lower than off-farm labor (see also Fall & Magnac, 2004). Moral frames related to AAM discourse may act to perpetuate this devaluation, for apprentices and farm workers alike, through

the valorization of sustainability-oriented farmers (Gray, 2013; Weiler, Otero, & Wittman, 2016). These cultural scripts may be enacted with the apprenticeship scheme.

Tokumitsu (2015) defines work ethic as “the idea that a person’s morality is manifest in a person’s approach toward work” (p. 9). However, the idea that one should be passionate about their work is, in her words, “to extract cheap work from a labor force that embraces its own exploitation” (p. 8). She points out that this assumes work is a choice. She also notes that “lovable work is visible work” (p. 19) – work that is contrasted among the invisible wage earners who support the work. She gives Steve Jobs as an example, since in touting the benefits of doing something you love, he renders invisible and does violence to those people who labor in the service of allowing him to live out his career doing what he ‘loves.’

So, a level of care and nuance should be developed to address labor consideration within on-farm apprenticeships, accounting for farmworker rights, while allowing on-farm apprenticeships to continue to be viable as a form of beginning farmer education. Guthman (2017) points out that the casualizing effect of the apprenticeship arrangement may erode waged labor. While the in-kind payment is the fundamental logic behind the apprenticeship arrangement (DOL, 2015; Lerman, 2013), the use of the apprenticeship model in agriculture, if misapplied, could nevertheless erode the legitimacy of agricultural labor laws.

In the past half-century, there has been a long-term shift away from reliance on labor, and towards mechanization (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005), which was encouraged by the USDA and research and extension efforts within the landgrant universities (Rasmussen, 1989, p. 83). Lewis’ (1954) classic dual economy model of agricultural economics was a cornerstone theory in these efforts (Taylor & Martin, 2001). In Lewis’ model, the “surplus labor” of the rural, diversified farm would be extracted out of farm operations, and brought to urban areas to work in

other industries, after technology increases were implemented in rural areas. The rural-to-urban migration is considered, in agricultural economics, an unimpeachably sound path to economic development (Taylor & Martin, 2001). Long before Lewis, Marx (1867) had conceptualized this scheme in *Capital*, when he says, “they conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a ‘free’ and outlawed proletariat” (p. 9). Hence, the rural flight transpired, and the available farm labor in rural areas dwindled (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). It was no accident of chance or whim that local labor shortages in the U.S. exist. Nor is it a short-term problem, that a short-term solution may fix.

Meeting labor needs is now considered a significant barrier for farmers (Gillespie & Johnson, 2010; Ruhf, 2001). Immigrant farmworkers have been recruited to fill this labor gap, whether through government guestworker programs such as H-2A, informally and/or formally, or through farm labor contractors. Volunteer labor, including on-farm apprenticeships, is also occasionally presented as an inexpensive solution to local labor shortages (Kalyuzhny, 2011; Terry, 2014). As Pilgeram (2011) writes, many small, diversified, direct-marketing farmers have come to depend on an annual supply of on-farm apprentices. This “labor force” is comprised of a steady stream of AAM participants, who often come from a place of privilege, and are willing and able to work on a farm for little or no pay (often for room and board only) for a delimited duration.

Pilgeram (2011) and Maxey (2006) point out that farmers often do not have the funds to hire workers at a living wage, which CIW (2016) has also argued. So, the lack of fair treatment of farm laborers is not a simple matter of profit-hoarding farmers (Holmes, 2013). Both immigrant farmworker and on-farm apprentice have in common that they are normally not paid a

living wage, lack standard employee benefits, and often have tenuous legality behind their arrangements. Both are part of the mosaic of tenuous and questionable work arrangements that typify the landscape of local labor shortages in agriculture.

AAM discourse mobilizes on-farm apprentices to undertake farm labor, but their embodied class habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) does not include knowledge and skills of performing manual labor for pay, nor does it have the language of the working class – class struggle, labor unions, and better labor conditions. The increased mobility (compared to that of farmworkers) afforded by middle- to upper-class status does not include proletariat struggle for better working conditions, since unfair or unsafe working conditions can be abandoned without much fear of penalty. Immigrant farmworkers, on the other hand, herald from the aforementioned “weak bargaining position” (Shreck, Getz & Feenstra, 2006, p. 441), in which their position is one of less mobility.

Organic and sustainable agriculture do not guarantee better labor conditions for any group. Shreck, Getz, and Feenstra (2006) in a survey of organic growers, had lukewarm reactions to the idea of incorporating basic labor protections into the social certifications for organic certification, such as collective bargaining rights, a living wage, and good working conditions. They also write that large organic farms in their study were more likely than small organic farms to provide fringe benefits to workers, thus paralleling Sbicca’s (2015) findings. MacAuley and Niewolny (2016); Wood (2013); and Ekers and Levkoe (2017); find some level of dissatisfaction among on-farm apprentices who believe they are overworked and underpaid, albeit on small, diversified farms.

From a Marxist (1848) perspective, structures surrounding farm labor are acting as Althusser’s (1970) ideological state apparatus (ISA). As ISAs, they are a means of reproducing

ideologies from one generation to the next, which act as conservative forces that preserves social conventions and institutions, which then recreates dominant systems of power and identity. Therefore structures within the system (structural racism, invisibility of farm labor, symbolic forms of agrarianism, cultural whiteness in spaces) may act to replicate means of production (farm labor scenarios), and the circumstances needed for production. Informed by Marx, Althusser and Gaventia (1982) write that those who own the means of production tend to manipulate and control this socially reproductive process. By embracing these critical perspectives, we see that agricultural policy recreates the conditions needed for production and capital accumulation, and that powerful interests may manipulate these conditions.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by three different bodies of theory to describe the complex phenomenon of on-farm apprenticeships. In order to adequately describe on-farm apprenticeships, I draw from elements of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), new social movement theory, and identification theory. In this section, I explain each approach or frame individually, then emphasize how they fit together here in order to study on-farm apprenticeship activity. I explain how cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) and cognitive approaches in social movement theory may supplement each other to comprise my theoretical framework for exploring issues within on-farm apprenticeship.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

This study is informed primarily by *cultural historical activity theory* (CHAT). While CHAT is occasionally referred to more generally as simply *activity theory* (Sawchuk, 2003), in this study, I choose to embrace the specific terminology of “CHAT” in order to accentuate the cultural and historical, therefore the critical, perspectives within activity theory. CHAT addresses the process through which “learning involves a subject in some kind of goal-oriented action mediated by some kind of object or tool” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 39). CHAT is a “theory based in social relations of labor, tool mediation, and language” (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 37). Activity theory is growing in popularity as a conceptual tool used by social researchers (Roth, 2004), and aids in revealing power structures (Roth & Lee, 2007). The strength of CHAT is that it renders visible the sociomaterial, the tools, artifacts, and mediating structures, as they are socially mediated and structurally determined, within a constructivist paradigm.

There are three generations of activity theory that are commonly recognized, associated with three key authors: Vygotsky, Leont’ev, and Engeström (Sawchuk, 2003; Sawchuk, 2011;

Taylor, 2014). CHAT is heavily influenced by the work of Russian educational philosopher Lev Vygotsky (Taylor, 2014). Vygotsky emphasized meaningful social interaction and activity in learning (Schunk, 2012). So, for Vygotsky, learning, and in fact all complex cognition, is based first around the meanings associated with symbols (especially language), tools, and other elements of context. Because Vygotsky's work enabled a paradigmatic shift into a more constructivist way of viewing learning, his work enabled what would eventually become an "activity theory of personality and learning" (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 37). Although his writings were initially suppressed in the Stalin era-Russia, his writings were eventually popularized and gained influence within education and philosophy fields throughout the Post-World War Two era (Schunk, 2012; Taylor, 2014).

Leont'ev, a collaborator with Vygotsky (Schunk, 2012, Taylor, 2014), ultimately outlived Vygotsky to continue to elaborate on the social, historical, and material mediation of learning and cognition. As Niewolny and Wilson (2009) noted, Leont'ev shifted the focus to "actors performing actions (i.e., activity) with the appropriation of tools in historically and socially defined settings" (p. 38). Thus, Leont'ev grants the CHAT model a fluidity and diversity of symbols through which meaningful interaction transpires to construct knowledge. Both Vygotsky and Leont'ev allow a Marxist translation of learning, by highlighting the power dynamics that express themselves in learning due to symbolic mediation in social and historical contexts.

Engeström, (1999) later meticulously mapped the intellectual lineage of CHAT, and has ultimately developed what has been termed "third generation CHAT" (Sawchuk, 2003; Taylor, 2014). For Engeström, Vygotsky's and Leont'ev's representations fell short of the goal of explaining how sociomaterial contextual factors play out in activity. He thought their model did

not “fully explicate the societal and collaborative nature of ... actions” (Engeström, 1999, p. 30). Engeström’s version of CHAT, which is commonly schematized as in Figure 1, added the sociomaterial elements to portray rules, community, and division of labor, in order to arrive at more detail and power to describe how sociomaterial elements contribute to activity. Engeström also emphasized the power of CHAT to highlight incongruences, or inherent conflicts, in an activity system, thereby understanding when learning occurs within the activity system. In third generation CHAT, the potential to analyze power dynamics and political factors and structures received greater emphasis.

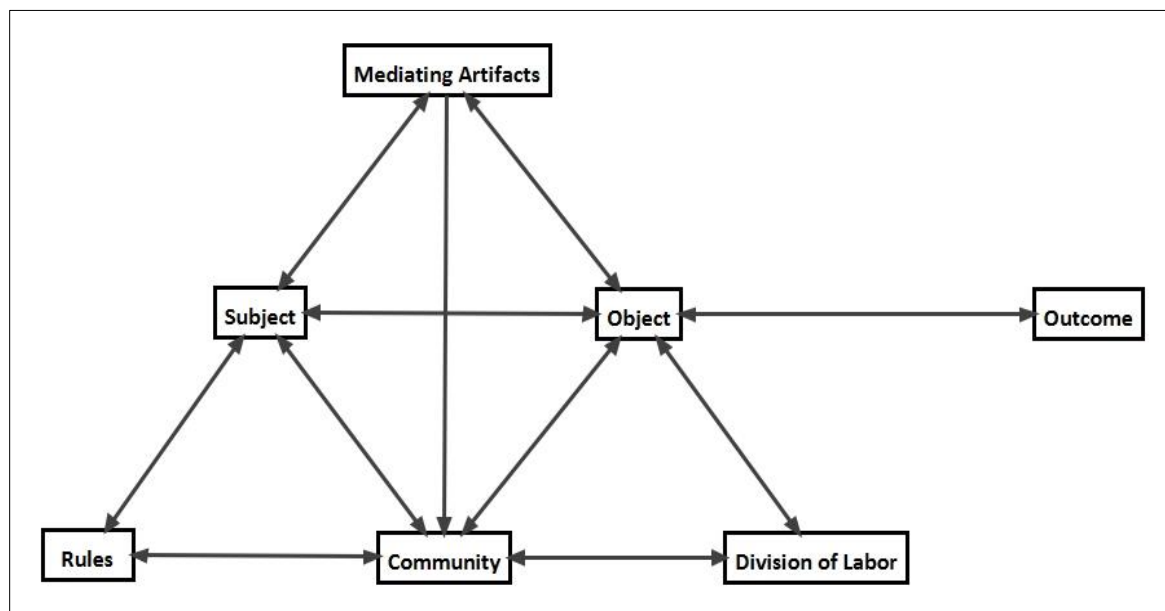


Figure 1: A conception of third-generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (adapted from Engeström, 1999).

CHAT is difficult to place definitively into one theoretical body, belonging instead to several (Fenwick, et al, 2011). For Fenwick (2003) and Schunk (2012), CHAT is related to experiential learning, and assumes a constructivist theoretical foundation, whereby learning is co-constructed through sociomaterial interaction within a context (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). As

Schunk (2012) explains, “constructivism stresses situated cognition and the importance of taking the context of environments into account to explain behavior” (p. 254). Constructivism is the idea that knowledge is not discovered or found, but rather sense-making happens as a strategy to cope with and make order with his/her environs (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The concept of constructivism, therefore, holds that knowledge is co-created within complex relationships with/in context(s).

CHAT has also been related to Lave’s (1988) situated learning theory (Niewolny & Wilson, 2009; Sawchuk, 2003). Indeed both are constructivist theories (Fenwick, 2003), and assume that knowledge is constructed through meaningful social interaction with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In situated learning, the learner is not divorced from context, and knowledge is co-constructed within a recursive, dynamic, and fluid relationship with/in sociopolitical contexts through acculturation and human-mediated activity (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988). For Niewolny and Wilson, situated learning shares a constructivist orientation with CHAT, but it proceeds from a somewhat different theoretical base. They point out that of the two, CHAT offers more descriptive potential to analyze power and political elements within activity systems.

CHAT has also been related to actor network theory (ANT), as they are both sociomaterial network theories that can be used to trace education within the joint social activity in relational systems (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011). Both theories fall within historical materialist discourses and can be used to analyze power. CHAT, however, allows one to employ concepts of identity, as it specifically dimensionalizes human actors as distinct from other materials that exert force on the system.

Giddens (2013) similarly recognizes the dialectic nature of cognition and activity through his construct of the “duality of structure, [which] appears as both condition and consequence of the production of interaction” (p. 165). Giddens (2013) adds:

The failure of Anglo-American philosophy of action to develop a concern with institutional analysis is reflected in an overconcentration upon purposive conduct... ‘intention,’ ‘reason’ and ‘motive’, I have argued, are all potentially misleading terms, since they already presuppose a conceptual ‘cutting into’ the continuity of action, and are aptly treated as expressing an ongoing reflexive monitoring of conduct (pp. 164-165).

Thus Giddens emphasizes the focus on activity, rather than the constructed separating out of cognition as its own entity.

Historical contexts are an important consideration when describing activity in CHAT. Here, “human interaction is necessarily mediated by objects, methods, norms, values, and other aspects of culture that is produced by human beings” (Sawchuk, Duarte & Elhammoumi, 2006, p. 36). Knowledge construction occurs through meaningful interaction within sociomaterial contexts, informed by histories. The full activity system, which places subjects in context of history and material, is “the minimal unit of analysis for the understanding of cognitive development, human participation, and change... [and] at its heart it affirms that all human practice is mediated by symbolic, cultural, and communal, as well as material, resources, or tools; it is through these forms of mediation that human practice is understood as both dynamic and historical” (Sawchuk, Duarte & Elhammoumi, 2006, p. 2). So, no knowledge can truly be distilled from a learner’s sociohistorical and physical context. The emphasis on the historical expressions, symbolic meanings, and interpretations, draw the attention to forms of power within the system. They allow us to see histories of oppression, ways in which narratives are enacted to divide labor, define rules of the interaction, and confine actors to social roles within the system.

This allows a clear analytic for drawing inferences about equity and justice within the activity system.

Activity is based in fluid social interaction in context, but social interaction may still be informed, experienced, and mediated through/by the sheer physicality of material things, in real-time. CHAT emphasizes the importance of the sociomaterial in learning and cognition (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011), as it places attention on structural conditions, tools, physical surroundings, and other physical factors that impact human learning and activity. Fenwick, et al, point out that CHAT “persistently and forcefully directs attention to the importance of the form, through which people’s social creation and use of tools/artefacts (culturally) successively over time (historically) explains learning and development” (p. 56). Fenwick, et al, also describe CHAT as one of a body of complexity theories, because it “analyzes the ongoing dynamic interactions with people and artifacts with an expansive view of learning” (p. 8).

An important distinction is the understanding of the nature of the sociomaterial. In this vein, Connolly states that the sociomaterial is:

Irreducible simultaneously to eliminative materialism, to mechanistic theories of causation, to grand teleologies pulled by a final purpose, to simple human intentionalism, to the most familiar notions of progressive time, to any notion of complete explanation, and to the sharpest lines of division between nonliving nature and human agency. Being so, it seeks to render us more sensitive to a variety of nonhuman force fields that impinge upon politico-economic life as it too impinges upon the force fields (p. 9).

In this sense, materialism is examined as a force within a constructivist notion that physical things are mediated (i.e., interpreted, modified, rendered invisible or hyper visible, etc.) through social interaction, power, knowledge, and history. Connolly thus terms this *fragility*. While materials are forcefully present, they are forever up to interpretation.

CHAT has unique implications for social reproduction of extant circumstances. If these circumstances may be problematic, the problematic elements may be reproduced, which CHAT

may help illuminate. Because CHAT works from a constructivist paradigm of learning (Fenwick, 2003; Schunk, 2012), it is a useful way to analyze on-farm apprenticeship activity. Parr and Trexler (2011) detail how student farms at colleges and universities are important sites of knowledge co-creation through experiential learning for apprentices. On-farm apprenticeships are spaces for learners to co-construct knowledge through experiential learning, social interaction, and in material contexts, rather than deliver knowledge in a top-down, expert-driven model (Parr & Trexler, 2011). These studies make it clear that the constructivist lens is an ideal framework for depicting the nature of the experience of on-farm apprentices. CHAT creates a constructivist, holistic picture of the entire nuanced experience of human practitioners as learners and actors within a given setting, and yet takes into account tools, artifacts, and other elements in understanding the nature of recursive knowledge co-construction.

Cognitive Praxis from New Social Movement Theory

This study is also informed by new social movement theory, namely the construct of cognitive praxis, an idea within the realm of collective identity theory (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). In response to the more structurally deterministic classic social movement theories, new social movement theory emphasizes cultural and social elements within social movements, as I will explain in this section. Social movements may be defined as:

First... challengers to or defenders of existing structures or systems of authority; second, they are collective rather than individual enterprises; third, they act, in varying degrees, outside existing institutional or organizational arrangements; fourth, they operate with some degree of organization; and fifth, they typically do so with some degree of organization (Snow & Soule, 2010, p. 6).

Social movement theory, as an interdisciplinary theoretical body centered around sociology (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2007), seeks to understand how and why social movements emerge, how they are organized, what makes them effective, and the dynamics at work within

them (Snow & Soule, 2007). Social movement theory may be broken down into three main areas: collective behavior, resource mobilization/political process, and “new” social movement theory, which focuses on emotions and culture (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 26).

Collective behavior theories were first attempts at explaining social movements. Early collective behavior theorists sought to prevent social movements, and therefore the field devoted much attention to theories was on predicting the emergence of social movements (Goodwin & Jasper, 2009). They sought to understand why individuals would choose to become involved in social movements, and what predicted these movements, and they therefore said that collective grievances and frustrations led to socially deviant behavior, in the form of social movements (Staggenborg, 2011). As Eyerman and Jamison (1991) point out, “in the name of scientific progress, sociologists of social movements served to tame social movements. By bringing them under academic control, however, they perhaps unwittingly bring them under political control, as well” (p. 2). So collective behavior theories, centered around common grievance and frustration, delegitimated movements with an emphasis on how to politically control them. Because social movements are now considered a normal part of the political landscape rather than irrational collective behavior, “these early theories are no longer taken very seriously” (Goodwin & Jasper, 2009, p. 11).

Structural approaches then emerged to theorize social movements. As partial founders of structural approaches to social movement theory, McCarthy and Zald (1977) famously critiqued collective behavioral approaches to social movements. They cited as evidence the omnipresence of grievances, yet the sporadic and unpredictable nature of the emergence of social movements. For McCarthy and Zald, social movements were more likely to gain momentum if they could effectively mobilize resources. They highlighted the importance of *social movement*

organizations in remaining organized and mobilizing resources. They also described resources that social movements typically mobilize, including from *adherents* to a social movement (those who believed in the underlying motive but may not stay engaged over time), whereas *constituents* stay engaged (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Staggenborg, 2011). McCarthy and Zald recognized the limitations of their theory due to the lack of treatment of political factors, calling it a “partial theory.” However, it was found to be far more predictive of the emergence of social movements than collective behavior theory (Staggenborg, 2011). Resource mobilization theories eventually became part of structural approaches, as part of the “classical social movement agenda” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 20).

Added to the structural approaches, or classical agenda, was the notion that social movements would emerge when there exists *political opportunity* (Snow & Soule 2007). The theory predicts that social movements are more likely to emerge and become successful if there is a real (or perceived) opportunity for change. Critics point out that due to power imbalances between elites (who act to maintain the status quo) and challengers (who want to effect social change), political opportunity is often a fickle predictor for social movements (Snow & Soule 2007). However, as Goodwin and Jasper (2009) point out, elites may be divided in opinion, which may provide political opportunity for a social movement (p. 12). If elites are divided and novel modes of protest or resistance can be enacted, political opportunity can be an important factor for predicting social movements’ emergence and success. Political opportunity is therefore part of the repertoire of classical social movement theory, or structural approaches.

As a third element of the structural approaches, leaders of social movements often engage in work around *collective action frames*, where they reframe, or re-envision, their perceptions of factors in their contextual surrounds, such as legal frameworks, policy initiatives, or social

practices. A reimagining of the hegemonic “master narrative” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 20) rejects the ways of viewing the world that are explained through dominant knowledge regimes.

Reframing issues is at the heart of what Macedo (1991) calls ontological politics. In redefining issues in new frames, social movements uncover hidden agendas, and erode the power base of ideological structures within social reproduction, which elite classes typically hold the power to do (see Gaventa, 1982). Therefore, the reframing of master narratives is part and parcel of the ways social movements effect structural change. Frame analysis leads us to discover which discourses are being enacted (Snow, 2007). In the words of Smith and Fetner (2007), “the structural approach to social movements brings to the forefront of analysis the institutionalized injustices and inequalities over which contested politics are fought” (p. 14). Thus, structural approaches were categorized together as resource mobilization theory, political opportunity analysis, and cultural/collective action frames (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 21).

In the past two decades, however, many have become critical of structural approaches, a.k.a. the classic theory of social movements (Goodwin & Jasper, 2004), and started developing a new theory of social movements. These theorists were unsatisfied with the structural approaches as a means to describe and predict social movements, since in their view, social movements were perceived more broadly as cultures and ideologies in their own right. Because so many new theories have been developed in the time since, it has been called the “cultural turn” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 21) of social movement theory.

New social movement theory begins with the assertion that “there are new grievances in a postindustrial society” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 22). For Staggenborg, new movements are aware of quality of life issues. Structural approaches have not been highly successful in predicting the success of social movements, since they were narrowly focused on predicting emergence of

social movements, rather than other factors at play in how social movements create meaning and cultural change (Goodwin & Jasper, 2004). New social movement theories focus on issues such as the role of cultural factors and emotions in a social movement, and seek to describe and theorize social movements in a voice closer to the populations of social movement practitioners. In this context, culture is broadly defined. Jasper (2007) writes that culture is understood as “shared mental worlds and their perceived embodiments” (p. 60).

One of the hallmarks of the cultural turn within social movement theory is the deployment of “social constructionism” (Jasper, 2007, p. 59). This paradigmatic stance helps social movement theorists and practitioners view assumptions of the dominant narrative. As Jasper writes, the cultural turn therefore showed that “aspects of the world that we take for granted as unchangeable or biological have instead been created by those in power as a means to retain their positions (gender being the most studied example)” (p. 59). The cultural turn, then, is informed by a poststructuralist rendering of a more general intellectual postmodernist turn (Kurzman, 2004).

Collective identity is considered an important focus of new social movement theory (Staggenborg, 2011). Eyerman and Jamison (1991) write that a social movement is distinguished by its collective identity, which they say form the cognitive praxis of a movement. Cognitive praxis is the enactment of ideals, existing between theory and practice, where intellectual engagement with the content of social movements – discourses, logics, knowledge regimes and skills – become lived experience. Cognitive praxis comprises the life and collective identity of a social movement. I here engage with the work of Eyerman and Jamison (1991), who define cognitive praxis as having three dimensions: cosmology, technique, and organization. Through looking at these dimensions, they say cognitive praxis becomes “social activity rather than

aspects of thought... a living movement rather than disembodied forms of consciousness” (p. 70).

Cognitive praxis is broken down into three dimensions, which serve to conceptualize a movement’s collective identity by providing useful categories with which to comprehend the various forms and types of a movement’s collective identity. First, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) discuss the dimension of *cosmology*, which can be understood as the movement’s worldview, or paradigm. This dimension is informed by ontological politics of the movement through collective action frames (Staggenborg, 2011). Jasper (2007) also writes that collective action frames are part of the cultural analysis. The cosmology of the cognitive praxis thus collects together the regimes and traditions of knowledge and discourses that inform the movement, which are recursively shaped by movement practitioners.

The second dimension of Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) cognitive praxis of a social movement they term the movement’s *technique*. The technique includes the technical knowledge and skills that are a part of the overall activity of the movement. One example, within AAMs, is the knowledge of organic gardening, or of how to cook vegetables. Based on the participants in this study, these seem to be consistently valorized knowledge, and are part of the overall technique of the movement. The technique of a movement generally takes into account the technical and practical goals, the immediate plans of the movement.

As for the third dimension of cognitive praxis, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) say, “between theory and practice, cosmological and technical dimensions, there is the organization dimension” (p. 76). The *organizational* dimension is a way of understanding the activities of the social movement, their tactics for realizing goals according to their paradigm. As a fundamental

part of collective identity, this can be understood as the structures brought about by collective action, the “what we do” of a social movement.

Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) cognitive praxis theory is thus employed in this study. Participants in AAMs identify strongly with a shared, durable set of values, beliefs, and practices (Constance, et al, 2014; Sbicca, 2012). Because factors of identity politics in on-farm apprenticeship practitioners have a high relevance to their location within AAMs and on-farm apprenticeship and to their likely knowledge, tastes, preferences, values, and beliefs, cognitive praxis within social movement discourse has explanatory potential.

Sawchuk found that identity considerations were vital to understanding the behaviors and attitudes within apprenticeship programs in manual trades. He says:

“The infusion of identity in this transition is palpable in the interviews – it is not simply about changing jobs or employment status, this is about practicing self, community, identity, agency. For many of the participants, apprenticing provides not only access to credentials, future income and a community of practice, but engagement in new practices of self-respect, manhood, family life, community life, as well as self-esteem, competency, and, to some degree, agency.” (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 15)

Thus cognitive praxis adds the specific interpretations of social movement discourse into the theoretical underpinning of this study.

Cultural Identity Theory from Cultural Studies

Cultural studies views culture as the main modus operandi for the reproduction of cultural hegemony, and adds understanding to how “subordinate and marginalized groups resist the imposition of meanings which reflect the interests of the dominant groups” (Sardar and Van Loon, 1997, p. 54) Cultural studies “has tended to oppose reductionist Marxism, understood as a hard determinism of both history and economics” (Sardar and Van Loon, 1997, p. 55). So, this research draws from cultural studies to understand identity as non-reductionist, and yet taking

into account factors that exclude and marginalize certain historical identity groups such as nonwhite racial groups and low socioeconomic status groups.

Hall (1996) writes that identity is ever changing, relational, and occasionally constitutive of conflicts and “suturing” (p. 2) together of multiple discursive elements. It involves boundary work and frontier work, necessitating othering. In the tradition of Hegel’s dialectics, and particularly his notion of conflict (Spencer, Krauze, & Appignanesi, 1996), the identification process involves negation, delineating the outside other, which motivates movement towards that perceived as same. In other words, identification involves recognizing the hated, just as much as the loved. For Hall (1996) “It seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs - or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all such subjectification appears to entail, the question of identification” (p. 2). Social identity theory is therefore a crucial element to understanding how meanings are socially constructed as parts of discourse and in context, which leads to myriad expressions, conformity, and creativity.

Hall (1996) conceives identities: “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (p. 4). Bauman (1996) argues that identification is a continual process in our current context, since truth-seeking of previous generations has created a postmodern breaking down of firm attachment to identity. He writes of the identification process as a life-game, arguing: “in the life-game of the postmodern consumers the rules of the game keep changing in the course of playing...to keep the life-games short means to beware long-term commitments. To refuse to be

‘fixed’ in one way or the other. Not to get tied to the place. Not to wed one’s life to one vocation only” (p. 24). As Grossberg (1996) writes, identification processes are ever-changing, structured, symbolic representations. He rejects the notion of identity as “one fully constituted, separate and distinct identity” (p. 89). Thus, identity is never fixed, never a completed project.

Hall (1996) provides three types of identity responses to hegemonic discourse: oppositional, assimilative, and negotiated. Oppositional identification processes tend to reject cultural narratives, while assimilative tend to accept these narratives. A negotiated identity response tends to accept some elements and reject others. Hall also introduces the concept of suturing, which gives us the idea that identity is an assemblage of various elements that are sewn together in semi-conscious processes of identification. The assemblage may have elements that are conflicting, congruent, or unrelated with one another.

Although Hall (1996) and others (Lave, 1988) accentuate the fluidity and contextuality of identity, Lamont (1997) makes the point that his empirical evidence shows there is a measure of stability and durability of the symbolic boundary objects girding the self-identification of his study participants. To quote Hall (1996), “the ‘unities’ which identities proclaim are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion, and are the result, not of a natural and inevitable or primordial totality but of the naturalized, overdetermined process of ‘closure’” (p. 5). For Hall, Foucault had the difficulty of eradicating the body as physical basis for any form of self-identification, and thus presenting the body as “infinitely malleable and contingent” (p. 11). Hall establishes that Foucault later revised this impression, but that the “infinitely malleable” interpretations of the body has carried forward in subsequent interpretations to Foucault’s work. Foucault also adds to Hall’s conception of identification the notion of self-fashioning by adding the idea of normative self-regulation. Hall points out these versions of identity do not easily

account for resistance – negotiated self and oppositional self, because, he adds, the body and sociomaterial lends some stability to a negotiated identity.

As Hall (1996) argues, Butler's (1993) work also has the same difficulty dealing with the interpretation of the body. Butler's versions of identity center around a psychoanalytic perspective, which uses an individualistic language that has vague associations to material. In the words of Hall (1996):

In *Gender Trouble* (1990) and more especially in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Judith Butler has taken up, through her concern with 'the discursive limits of "sex"' and with the politics of feminism, the complex transactions between the subject, the body and identity, through the drawing together in one analytic framework insights drawn from a Foucauldian and a psychoanalytic perspective (p. 14).

So, in part due to their foundations in psychoanalysis, these conceptions are individualistic in language, but expressly constructivist. The postmodern turn makes any relation to the sociomaterial slippery. In cultural identity theory, this difficulty translates into a lack of regard for how the body and forms are exerting force on social constructions.

Interaction of Complementary Theories in the Study

I splice together these three concepts to offer a deeper understanding of the on-farm apprenticeship. While the backbone of this analysis is third-generation CHAT as conceptualized by Engeström (2000), I also employ the construct of cognitive praxis as described by Eyerman and Jamison (1991), within new social movement theory, and Hall's (1996) cultural identity theory.

Because I intend to study learning in a site of activity for AAMs, I utilize the descriptive power of activity theory (CHAT; Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi, 2006). According to CHAT, "human interaction is necessarily mediated by objects, methods, norms, values, and other aspects of culture that is produced by human beings" (Sawchuk, Duarte & Elhammoumi, 2006,

p. 36). Cultural and historical elements appear when humans place their activity in contexts of past knowledge and experiences. Learning within CHAT theory is consistent with critical constructivist paradigms, in which learning is not a means of knowledge acquisition from external to internal individual thinking minds, but a constructed reality of a learner in concert and inseparable from the world around the learner.

Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk (2011) point out that in activity theory, however, “despite the seemingly natural pull of educational researchers to focus on student learning and development, we nevertheless see a persistent appreciation of both the social relational and specifically materialist dimensions of practice” (p. 93). So, due to its focus on materialist interpretations of activity systems, CHAT is a helpful framework to discuss on-farm apprenticeships, because it situates education and learning within the sociomaterial and in context. CHAT provides for us a way to see how rules, community, division of labor, and mediating artifacts become important aspects to subjects and objects that lead to some outcome of the activity system (Please see Figure 1 for a visual representation of CHAT). CHAT theory therefore provides helpful distinctions with which to view the sociohistorical realities in which actors negotiate meaning in a materialist frame (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011). Because I this study looks at the activity system, and not specifically individual actors, CHAT calls to the foreground the ways in which they socially interact and how material contexts mediate their practice. The focus on rules draws attention to the beliefs and values of actors, and how their activity is governed and/or mediated through the AAM discourse and other discourses within which they participate. The division of labor construct provides deep analytical power through which the labor constructs of actors become visible, and determine social reproduction occurring

therein. The mediating artifacts construct allows me to focus on material aspects governing this system. CHAT directs attention to outcomes, which allows for analysis of social reproduction.

Cognitive praxis constructs, on the other hand, may help examine and articulate activity specific to alterity. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) point out that one of the most helpful elements in collective identity politics is in its ability to address gaps in Marxist social theory, in order to explain how behavior may be affected by counter-hegemonic ontologies, values and beliefs, rather than Marxist structurally deterministic factors such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Cognitive praxis adds a way to dimensionalize discourse elements influenced by AAMs.

A high proportion of young, white, middle- to upper-class, college-educated people undertake apprenticeship. Yet, Bourdieu (1984) would predict that there would be a low likelihood of this occurrence, taking into account social reproduction of circumstances of privilege. In order to gain perspective on such a conflict, I employ the construct of cognitive praxis in order to shed light on cultural identity of actors within the activity system. Hall's (1996) cultural identity theory examines how knowledge regimes are negotiated based on identity considerations, in relation to power, whereas cognitive praxis adds the considerations of movement identity. Oppositional identity may be translated by AAMs, and a more assimilative identity may be adopted within an activity system with an overall oppositional stance. Oppositional, assimilative, or negotiated identities may be formed recursively within the activity system and influenced by AAM discourse (Hall, 1996).

On-farm apprenticeship is a site for AAM cognitive praxis, but also includes elements that are not addressed by social movement theory. In other words, much of the activity is outside of the matter that concerns new social movement theory; for example, sociomaterial and historical constraints on activity that exist in everyday circumstances, are outside of the realm of

transformational thinking and learning, and yet are important nuances that limit and channel activity. For clarification, one quick example is a tractor. While this object is perceived and understandings of it are constructed through lenses of social movement learning, it remains a physical, material object whose meanings are also construed by others outside AAMs and whose force as a physical object bears weight, directs action, and exerts forces on outcomes within the activity system. AAM discourse has things to say about a tractor, and therefore influences social constructions. Cognitive praxis constructs therefore benefits from CHAT's ability to dimensionalize how physical, material objects are used, understood, produced and reproduced within the phenomenon as translated through AAM discourse.

The interaction between CHAT and cognitive praxis provides generative dimensions through which to articulate the on-farm apprenticeship and farm labor activity. Much of the activity was unrelated or only marginally related to what would appropriately be understood as AAM praxis. While cognitive praxis emphasizes deconstruction of collective framings, and the durable sets of values and beliefs common to all learners, CHAT emphasizes rules, tools, community, and division of labor found locally in the activity system. The combination of elements of AAM discourse within the localized activity system is of interest to this study, and the combination of these theoretical bodies enabled the margin to become visible, where cognitive praxis imposes upon the activity system, and vice versa.

CHAT, cognitive praxis, and cultural identity theory work in tandem to conceptualize the relationship with the structural and contextual surrounds of on-farm apprenticeship. All three theories have a constructivist view of cognition, in which learning is not a means of knowledge acquisition from external to internal individual thinking minds, but a constructed reality of a learner in concert and inseparable from the world around the learner (Lave, 1988; Lincoln &

Guba, 2013). Rogoff (1990) writes that the mind is a “blend [of] ‘internal’ and ‘external,’” (p. 195). For Rogoff, learning is participating more than it is perceiving the external. She also notes the crucial construct of intersubjectivity, through which individuals create “shared understanding based on a common focus of attention and some shared presuppositions that form the ground for communication” (p. 71). Thus, humans have an instinctual ability to know the minds of others.

Rogoff (1990) also writes:

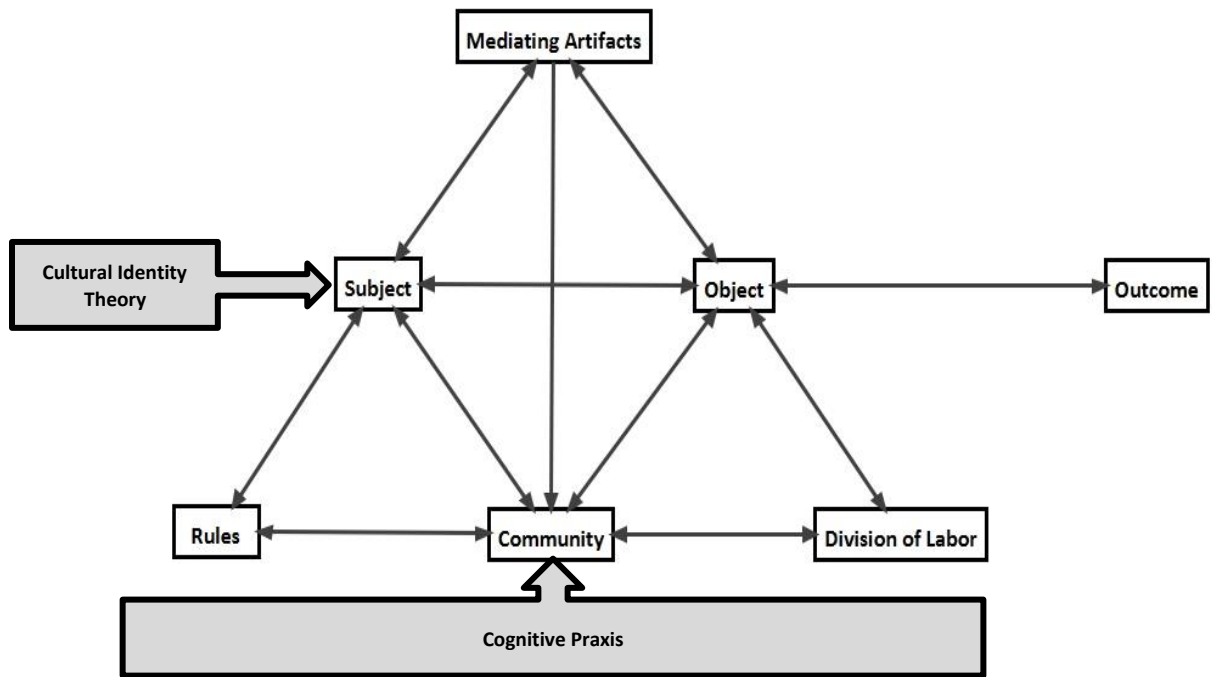
Individuals transform culture as they appropriate its practices, carrying them forward to the next generation in altered form to fit the needs of their particular generation and circumstances. The shifts in societal practices over decades and centuries result from the transformation of institutions and technologies to fit current needs. (p. 198).

So, according to Rogoff, above, learning and activity are necessarily dependent on connections with all other actors surrounding the learner and within contexts, as humans recursively transform the culture and setting in which they are. A learner is one node on an interconnected web of surrounding actors, elements, and environs. Because politics, histories, and materials are linked to this learning and cultural identity processes, cultural identity theory draws our attention to negotiated knowledge in power relations. CHAT provides theoretical explanation of how social reproduction may be occurring within the context of an on-farm apprenticeship. CHAT therefore adds constructs to describe socially reproductive outcomes, as an integral part of the theoretical framework for this research, along with collective identity theory.

As Figure 2 demonstrates, these theoretical frameworks are undergirded by the CHAT structure, which provides a comprehensive system of understanding the activity of participants, while adding emphasis on understanding how social factors and structural determinants guide actions through the rules, sociomaterial mediating artifacts, and division of labor. Cultural identity theory allows us to see the subject’s orientation towards negotiating identities as they encounter power-knowledge regimes, and layers of privilege. Cognitive praxis emphasizes the

worldviews, specialized technical knowledge, and organization modes common to participants due to AAM discourse, while also underscoring how the long-term desired outcome of the social movement interacts with the activity system's object and outcome.

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework with CHAT as backbone and cognitive praxis and cultural identity theory as supplements



As illustrated within Figure 2 and Table 1, the cognitive praxis that occurs in social movements, cultural historical activity theory, and cultural identity theory grants explanatory power for examining and articulating this activity. The interaction of these three theoretical bodies yields valuable insights into how the activity system functions.

Table 1: Operationalization of Theoretical Framework in Field Observation

| Theoretical Body | Construct | Operationalization |
|--|---|--|
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | Subject | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct expressions of conscious identity of participants • Markers of status, levels of privilege of participants • Social, economic, biophysical factors activity system, not immediately mutable, due to historic background • Race, Class, Gender, and education level of participants |
| | Sociomaterial Mediating Tools/Artifacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material tools and artifacts • Important physical spaces and social constructions of those spaces |
| | Rules | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly posted micro-level rules of farm • Tacit rules that are nevertheless observed • Rules challenged and negotiated • Macro-level rules of AAMs, activity system |
| | Division of Labor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles of participants within activity system • Viewpoints and opinions surrounding roles • Who does what, how stable this is |
| | Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of who composes the community • Actors' interactions within community, especially how this guides observed and/or expressed behavior, feelings, opinions • Exclusion; boundary markers of community |
| | Object | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expressed and/or unexpressed common goal(s) of the activity |
| | Outcome of Activity System | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overarching results produced/reproduced through activity |
| Cultural Identity Theory | Oppositional Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of hegemonic narratives • Expressed and observed signifiers of hegemonic discourse in general, but especially as it pertains to the dominant agrifood system • Expressed boundary marking or othering of oneself in relation to an object |
| | Assimilative Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of hegemonic narratives • Factors in the activity system's outcome that are reproductive of the means of |

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| | | production, or the circumstances necessary for production |
| | Negotiated Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of uncertainty, complexity, processing of/with hegemonic narratives • |
| Cognitive Praxis | Cosmology/Worldview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity of participants as an actor within the social movement |
| | Technique | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical knowledge and skills related to AAM discourse |
| | Long-term Outcomes or Movement Organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual resulting outcome desired by AAMs, informed by collective action framing of local mediating organization • Expressions about the desired long-term outcome(s) |

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Methodology

In this research, I look into the lived experiences of actors with and within AAM discourse, farm labor, and social (re)production, through an ethnographic case study of on-farm apprenticeship activity system surrounding a mediating, AAM-oriented organization. In this chapter, I discuss the critical ethnographic case study methodology, and describe my ontological, epistemological, and axiological approaches. Here, I also include a reflexivity statement, which is part of the iterative stages of reflexivity that have been a part of this research. I also detail my research questions, outline the logistics of the research, and the process of data collection and analysis. In short, I collected data through participant observation (53 days of observation), interviews (n=25), and document analysis (n=407), throughout May to October of 2016. Qualitative data analysis included semi-open coding using theoretical constructs of CHAT, social movement discourse, and identification processes.

Research Approach

Corbin and Strauss (2008) write that methodology is “a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena” (p. 1). They highlight the importance of first making clear how a researcher is thinking as they conduct a study. In the language of ontology, I find myself labeled a historical realist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, epistemologically I am a critical constructivist (Kincheloe, 2005). This paradigmatic orientation leads me to critical ethnographic case study methods. I also explain my personal historical truths as laid out in a reflexivity statement, intended to personally examine and lay bare my own subjective orientation to the subject matter.

Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology Explained

Often, it is said that four constructs guide the research process: ontology, which informs epistemology, which in turn informs axiological orientation, all of which informs methodology (Bailey, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Once a researcher understands their worldview, and can articulate it in the language of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, it becomes easier to form appropriate methodological research designs (Bailey, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009). As Tierney (1988) writes:

The matter is not merely that different tools measure different data, but that the questions from which the data arise come from different paradigms, and hence, will inevitably measure different data. Different paradigms create different questions with which to define a problem, different ways of answering those questions, and ultimately, different ways of understanding and thinking about the world (p. 226).

So, for Tierney, paradigms are like a foundation upon which all other decisions are based. A paradigm is sort of a mental model that maps the terrain upon which to locate other understandings. Thus, examination of different paradigms is paramount at the outset of the research process, for it guides which questions will be asked, while also affecting decisions on how to sufficiently create knowledge around the research topic(s), and what kinds of knowledge “count.” Paradigms, therefore, ultimately affect how knowledge is created/valued throughout academic research.

Ontology is, essentially, the nature of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The word ‘ontology’ means (derived from ancient Greek) the study of being-ness, or what-is-ness (D. Hewett, personal communication, January 19, 2016). Kincheloe (2005) defines ontology as “the branch of philosophy that studies that nature of being; that asks what it means to be in the world” (p. 7). Ontology attempts to address the question, “what is the nature of reality?” (Bailey, 2007,

p. 50). An ontological consideration seeks to define/express what *truth* is, whether there is a *truth*.

Epistemology means, literally (derived from ancient Greek), the study of knowledge (D. Hewett, personal communication, January 19, 2016). Kincheloe (2005) defines epistemology as “the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge and its production” (p. 8). The central question of epistemology often becomes “is what is learned independent of the researcher?” (Bailey, 2007, p. 50). In other words, is there a knowable objective truth, or is all knowledge actually subjective? One’s epistemology is affected by one’s ontology, for beliefs about truth, the existence of one’s environs, come to impact what one believes they know as truth – whether they could know truth with certainty, or only partially know, could never know, or only conditionally know. Epistemological considerations have guided my research methodology because the research act is essentially aiming to create new knowledge, which is accomplished in certain ways (though certain methodologies), based on understandings of how a knower could come to know truth or facts, and with what kind of certainty they might know them.

Axiology, is, simply, what the relationship of values will be to the research (Bailey, 2007). The fundamental question is, will values be explicitly acknowledged and recognized in the research? If so, whose values count? Ontological and epistemological considerations relate to axiological questions because if a researcher thinks there are definite truth/facts, and they think they will come to know truth/facts with certainty, they would think axiology has a very small role to play in knowledge creation (the research act). However, if a researcher believes there are no certain truth/facts, and they may never have certainty about external truth/facts, they will think axiological decisions about knowledge creation bear much more relevance to the research act. Therefore axiology also affects methodology, as do ontology and epistemology.

The great, ongoing riddle of ontology is whether or not there is an externally present “reality” or “truth.” Van Maanen (2004) writes that the quotation marks around these two words are now “hedgies from which these words are unlikely to ever escape” (p. 436), because there is no core consensus among social researchers if these exist, and if they do, in what form. The nature of reality, of what is, is inescapably difficult to fathom, and there are many different ontological orientations assumed by researchers.

Since there is no agreed upon notion of truth, one of the biggest paradigmatic debates is whether research can be conducted in an objective form, or whether subjectivity of researchers is recognized. Because the ontological nature of reality is not agreed upon in the field of qualitative inquiry (and certainly not among all other individuals involved in the research), there is similarly no epistemological assumption that we can know an objective truth. Or, if, as Lincoln and Guba (2013) say, we are eternally bound to our humanness, our perceptions are fragmenting the rays of our environs through our own subjective lenses. Kincheloe (2005) writes that objectivism is “the epistemological belief that disinterested knowledge can be produced about any phenomenon simply by following the scientific method” (p. 12), and it puts forward that in this paradigm, “knowledge is nothing more or nothing less than the scientific discovery of an external reality” (p. 13). Objectivism is axiomatically assumed to be value-free, in that truth is immutable, and therefore values will not affect how reality is perceived to the rigorous objective researcher. However, adherence to objectivism often suppresses the role of the researcher in the understanding and interpretation of reality, thus obfuscating the assumptions that led to conclusions or inferences that resulted from the research. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain, a focus on objectivity may undervalue “the importance in self-reflection both in its relation to what reality ‘is’ and to its role in ‘knowing’ it” (p. 5). Also, it is highly questionable whether

objectivity is possible with socialized human researchers. For Lincoln and Guba (2013) research “being conducted by humans who can never escape their emotions and values, can never be authentically objective” (p.50). These points lead Lincoln and Guba (2013) and others (Carspecken, 1996; Geertz, 1973) to proclaim that objectivity is a chimera and research is only honest and credible if the researcher declares her/his subjective proclivities.

These distinctions track the divide between qualitative and quantitative research, which have been called the “paradigm wars” (Gage, 1989, p. 4) through the 1970s and 1980s. Greene (2007) calls it the “great qualitative-quantitative debate” (p. 37). Quantitative research is often defined as numerical, reductionist, and summative, and qualitative research has been capriciously defined, at times, as any research that was not quantitative (Yilmaz, 2013). Throughout the paradigm wars, Lincoln and Guba (1985) sought to distinguish naturalist inquiry paradigms in their own right, separate from positivist/postpositivist paradigms, particularly in social research with human beings, because as Greene (2007) says, “human beings, unlike plants, act with intentionality” (p. 38) – although Connolly (2013) argues that they act with intentionality only a fraction of the time. The study of humans is therefore unlike the study of other biophysical matter. Rolfe (2006) points out that the qualitative discourse stemmed from a history of alterity, as it branched away from the quantitative worldview and practice. Kuhn’s (1970) major contribution was to show how discourses often adhere to, or separate from, each other due to standards of professional practice, rather than logic-based framings. So, much of the paradigm wars were to recognize that the professional practice of quantitative methods was insufficient to study human beings. Because quantitative methods were so well-established in professional practice (even called simply *the scientific method!*), a “war” had to be waged just to establish that there were possibly better ways to study human beings. Therefore, much of the emphasis on

paradigms seems to have been in response to an established order of quantitative professional practices, which hinged on adherence to objectivism. Quantitative research therefore has well-established and unquestioned ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions, while qualitative research encompasses a wide range of many positions that are variously put forward in different arenas (Rolfe, 2006).

Due, in part, to the positioning of the qualitative inquiry discourse as in opposition to quantitative methods, some social research methodologists differentiate between only two worldviews that loosely transpose to objectivism and subjectivism (see Bailey, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2011, p. 45) – positivism and interpretivism, respectively (Weber, 2004). *Positivism* can be defined as a rationalistic approach, where the researcher believes in an externally present “truth” or “reality” (objectivism) that must be found or discovered through particular research methods (Rossman & Rallis, 2011, p. 45). Positivism is modernistic in that it separates life, knowledge, and the world into Cartesian units or categories to examine independently of each other and independently of the knower (Kincheloe, 2008). Positivism is often associated with quantitative methodologies, but can also inform other methodologies (Bailey, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2011; Yilmaz, 2013). Those adhering to positivism seek to formulate generalizations, laws, and rules about how the world works. Bailey (2007) notes that positivism is easy to define due to its traditional association with objectivism and quantitative methods, whereas the other paradigms are more often disputed (p. 55).

Interpretivism, as opposed to positivism, holds that no objective, external reality exists, but that humans construct multiple realities (Bailey, 2007, p. 53). Interpretivism is seen as contextually specific and subjective, and applied to qualitative methodologies (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Influenced in part by Geertz (1973), interpretivism recognizes that humans do not

objectively observe, but only interpret their environs. Even Descartes (1641/1996), often considered one of the founders of rational, modernist, objectivist thought, understood this point and relished a healthy doubt, even saying “all that up to the present time I have accepted as most true and certain I have learned either from the senses or through the senses; but it is sometimes proved to me that these senses are deceptive, and it is wiser not to trust entirely to anything by which we have once been deceived” (p. 7). In Van Maanen’s (2004) view, interpretation happens throughout the research process, and there are three important “moments” (p. 429) of interpretation in qualitative inquiry: fieldwork (or data collection), analysis or writing it up, and the reading and interpreting of an ethnographic text, all of which hinge on the subjectivity of the knower. Interpretivism is postmodernist in that it eschews reductionist, simplistic explanations, and instead embraces the principle that knower cannot be separated from the known (Kincheloe, 2008). Interpretivism recognizes that since the world is complex, any attempt to describe or analyze it must be similarly complex, and anything less is suspect (Corbin & Strauss, 2011, p. 8; Kincheloe, 2008).

Bailey (2007) and Gage (1989), on the other hand, define three research paradigms, positivist, interpretivist, and a new one: critical theorist. The *critical theorist* paradigm has a similar ontology to interpretive paradigms as it recognizes multiple realities, but also emphasizes that “social reality is shaped by historical, political, cultural, and economic factors, as well as by ethnic, racial, and gendered structures, among others” (Bailey, 2007, p. 55). Axiomatically, critical perspectives recognize value systems of researchers and research participants, and these inform the research process (Bailey, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As Foley and Valenzuela (2005) write, the critical viewpoint embraces subjectivism, establishing the researcher’s place in the research. The critical paradigm embraces a slightly different ontological stance than

interpretivism, since it sees all knowledge as socially negotiated with/through power differentials, and truth claims are a part of – thus subject to – the many nuances of power imbalance and social relations (Carspecken, 1996).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) offer five research paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, and participatory. They define *postpositivism* as sharing the ontological assumptions of positivism, thus assuming an external truth and reality, but modifying positivistic epistemology in that it understands that the researcher as human may only imperfectly perceive this reality. For Guba and Lincoln, postpositivism still takes many of the axiomatic assumptions as positivism (e.g., objectivism, absence of values) and assumes that disinterested, value-free, rigorous, non-falsifiable findings are the hallmark of good research. Guba and Lincoln (2005) also add constructivism to the list of paradigms. *Constructivism*, by contrast, contends that knowledge is constructed socially and within a relationship with contextual surroundings and socially with others, sometimes “coalescing around consensus” (p. 196; also see Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Constructivism bears the postmodern ideal that boundaries between the knower and the known are illusory, and attempts to categorize are unhelpfully reductionist. Bailey (2007) mentions that some define interpretivism as synonymous with constructivism, but some instead view constructivism as a type of interpretivism.

Kincheloe (2008) offers critical constructivism as a worldview. For Kincheloe, *critical constructivism* combines parts of constructivism with critical theory, by acknowledging multiple realities and social co-construction of knowledge, while examining how social position, power, and social reproduction affect knowledge negotiation. Lather (1991) writes that a positivist paradigm is used to predict, whereas naturalistic and constructivist paradigms seek to understand, and a critical paradigm seeks to emancipate. So, there are many different research paradigms

outlined by many qualitative methodologists, and they serve to inform methodological decisions for the researcher. Paradigmatic positions, as we have seen, have significant impact on how research methodology unfolds (Bailey, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, Metzler, & Scott, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

Critical Constructivist Paradigmatic Orientation

Patton (2008) writes that methodological appropriateness is the gold standard for research projects, and as such, high quality research makes transparent the rationale for the chosen methodology. If ontologies and epistemologies direct one towards particular methodologies, I must overview these paradigmatic assumptions and how they directed me towards critical ethnographic case study as a methodology. Here, I analyze these, thus examining my own methodological appropriateness.

I align with Kincheloe's (2008) version of critical constructivism. The critical and constructivist positions constitute two different paradigms for Guba and Lincoln (2005). They define constructivist ontology as relativistic, co-constructed multiple realities, whereas a criticalist ontology uses historical realism shaped by sociohistorical factors. Guba and Lincoln (2005) are expressly constructivist, defining the ontology as "relativism – local and specific co-constructed realities" (p. 195). They also indicate a transactional/subjectivist epistemology, which leads to a hermeneutical/dialectical methodology. I also align with Lincoln and Guba's (2013) constructivist ontology when they state, "sense-making is an act of construal. Humans do not merely experience events, they create them. Construal, not discovery, is the critical act of perception and construction" (p. 45). They say both constructivism and criticalism employ a transactional/subjectivist epistemology, mediated respectively by values (critical) and co-created social realities (constructivist). For Guba and Lincoln, appropriate methodologies for

constructivism and criticalism are both dialectical, but in application, critical theory might be more dialogical and constructivism might be more hermeneutical.

Kincheloe's (2008) critical constructivism, in contrast, comprises a belief in multiple realities socially constructed (as in Guba and Lincoln's 'pure' constructivism), but incorporates the critical elements in order to examine how power, privilege, and narratives recursively inform these knowledge systems. This suits my belief that postmodern deconstructions, as in 'pure' constructivism, are helpful only in so much as they will also lead to emancipation with and for marginalized groups. As Carspecken (1996) writes of the critical element, plainly said, "we criticalists have both witnessed and directly experienced forms of oppression. We do not like them. We want to change them" (p. 8). Kincheloe (2008) writes, "when we attempt to remain neutral... we support the prevailing power structure" (p. 12). Kincheloe's position informs us that attempting to achieve value-free neutrality is in itself a political act, since it instills upon the researcher powerlessness and complicity. Giddens (2013) writes: "'mutual knowledge' ...represents the interpretive schemes which both sociologists and lay actors use, and must use, to 'make sense' of social activity" (p. 169). For Giddens, quality research is best understood as situated within a context and reflexive about the realities being recursively (re)produced.

For Kincheloe (2008), Carspecken (1996), and Giddens (2013), power is a part of paradigmatic considerations, since power affects knowledge creation. Knowledge can only be understood within power relations that reciprocally inform whose knowledge matters, what knowledge is visible or understood as knowledge, and what is concretized and reified as discrete knowledge 'units' (Foucault, 1984; Gaventa, 1982). For Gaventa, hegemonic power structures currently control knowledge and ensure these knowledge systems are reproductive in order to maintain the (oppressive) status quo (see also Fraser, 1989). As Lather (1991) also writes,

“whatever ‘the real’ is, it is discursive” (p. 25). So, because power cannot be divorced from knowledge systems, power balance must be included in ontological and epistemological considerations.

How Critical Constructivism Informs this Study

With these considerations, I adhere to principles set forth in Kincheloe’s (2008) critical constructivism. This has informed my dissertation research at several levels. First, since I believe that knowledge is socially constructed within relations, I chose as my unit of analysis not a set of individuals, but the participants involved and the sociomaterial context(s) and interactions between the individuals. In other words, my unit of analysis is the entire activity system in which the on-farm apprenticeships are based.

Critical constructivist ontology entails a transactional/subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). So I have formed my research questions in order to respect knowledge co-generation among those within the on-farm apprenticeship activity system, and to allow the research to co-construct knowledge with others. The emphasis on subjectivity and contextualized knowledge means I look at general knowledge construction, values, beliefs, and lived experiences, rather than individualized knowledge acquisition.

Because this study sought to research power within knowledge systems from a critical perspective, I choose a theoretical framework whose language will allow me to examine and deconstruct power systems within the object of inquiry. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT; Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi, 2006) allows such an analysis. According to CHAT, “human interaction is necessarily mediated by objects, methods, norms, values, and other aspects of culture that is produced by human beings” (Sawchuk, Duarte & Elhammoumi, 2006, p. 36).

So, the CHAT framework will help me see and articulate structures that create culture, learning, and power, and therefore fits well with a critical constructivist position.

The critical constructivist stance informed my chosen unit of analysis: the group of actors in the activity system and their interactions, naturalistic inquiry *in situ* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to allow knowledge co-construction in the greatest possible sense, means I have worked to ensure that the voices of the studied population to speak loudly in the research.

In Van Maanen's (2004) terms, "a text is axiomatically an ethnography if it is put forth by its author as a nonfiction work intended to represent, interpret, or (perhaps best) translate a culture or selected aspects of a culture for readers who are often but not always unfamiliar with that culture" (p. 434). Critical ethnographies are by contrast, he says, studies "wherein the represented culture is located within a larger historical, political, economic, social, and symbolic context than is said to be recognized by the cultural members" (p. 432). In this ethnographic case study, I seek not only to translate the culture of on-farm apprenticeship, as in a classical ethnography, but to critically locate it within its hegemonic structural context, in order to understand its interaction with agricultural labor and AAMs, more broadly.

It has been debated whether or not researchers' paradigms are fixed or can be fluid (Greene, 2007). Greene points out that "social inquiry paradigms are themselves intellectual constructions and so are not inviolate, immovable, static, or unshakable" (p. 52), but are not "whimsical or arbitrary" (p. 52) either. Therefore, paradigmatic orientations, both individually held, and as defined in qualitative inquiry discourse, are subject to reinterpretation and change. Paradigms may be more fluid than presupposed. So, although I employ a critical constructivist research paradigm to undertake a critical ethnographic case study of on-farm apprentices here in

my dissertation research, to paraphrase Lincoln and Guba (1985), I reserve the right to get smarter.

Rationale for the Critical Ethnographic Case Study Methodology

A critical ethnographic case study is a particularly salient methodology for studying on-farm apprenticeships, not just because of my own critical constructivist paradigm, but also because this particular study is a thick description of one case, and required the insights that a critical constructivist stance promotes. As I have explained, critical constructivists believe that knowledge co-creation is mediated by power relations. The overall purpose of my dissertation research is to explore activity, identity, and praxis of on-farm apprenticeship participants (apprentices, host farmers, and others), their experiences of labor, and how structural elements, including racialized, classed, and gendered habitus, affects learning and social reproduction within on-farm apprenticeships.

On-farm apprenticeships are likely to be populated by participants of alternative agrifood movements (AAMs), which are dominated by upper- to middle-class, white cultural norms (Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007). Because on-farm apprenticeships are associated with AAMs, they may share an ideological orientation towards romanticized agrarianism (Carlisle, 2013), or even unknowingly perpetuate neoliberalist values (Guthman, 2008b). AAMs, like many social institutions, may be reproducing ideologies that act to recreate the status quo that supports, rather than challenges, hegemonic structures (Allen, 2011). Critical ethnography examines this interplay, as it explicitly, deliberately interrogates the co-creation of knowledge to unravel threads of the discourse that may be acting to support hegemonic structures. Because class-based, and other equity-related, factors often informed activity in the system, criticalism in the study was needed to reveal power relationships within the system.

Additionally, I ask how work is regarded and experienced by participants in on-farm apprenticeship. I am particularly interested in this because of the class-based social reproduction that may be present. As Torlina (2011) writes, “for the variety of blue-collar workers... work is a source of pride and satisfaction. For middle-class professionals on the other hand, blue-collar work is shameful. It is seen as simple, subservient, and alienating” (p. 179). Torlina argues that class-based dynamics therefore perpetuate class division and oppression by reproducing the “devaluation of physical work” (p. 188) among the middle- and upper class, with the consent of working class individuals. Also, Beder (2000) details the historical roots of the work ethic, tracing back to intentional efforts by powerful individuals, from early capitalists, factory owners, churches, to transnational corporations in the 1940s-2000s. For Beder, the work ethic assures that “work provides identity in terms of class and status within an established occupational hierarchy” (p. 125). Considering this class-based value system surrounding work, critical ethnographic methods provide a particularly powerful platform from which to frame and articulate the way work is regarded and experienced here, especially considering the expression of values of romanticized agrarianism. As Gaventa (1982) and Carspecken (1996) would say, there are multiple consciousnesses expressed within this system. Observation and power analyses are necessary to be able to truly demystify how middle- to upper-class AAM participants, engaging in work outside their class expectations, may or may not be socially reproducing the conditions necessary for the means of production (including romanticized agrarian and/or neoliberalist/productivist values).

Critical ethnographic case study methodology is also appropriate because other methodologies (simple interviewing, for example) would not allow me to situate the experiences of the actors within the context in which they live and work, in order to see the lived experiences

of the participants and experience firsthand what they experience. Power mediates all knowledge creation (Foucault, 1984), so socially constructed norms often delimit what we say or do not say, or even what we do or do not see or recognize, even to ourselves. To quote Brookfield (2001), “ideologies are hard to detect being embedded in language, social habits, and cultural forms that combine to shape the way we think about the world. They appear as commonsense, as givens, rather than as beliefs that are deliberately skewed to support the interests of a powerful minority” (p. 12). Criticality recognizes multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), as actors constructed identities and produced activity, which can sometimes be viewed more than spoken.

Yin (2013) offers a way to evaluate if case study research is an appropriate design. He writes that case study methodology is best when it answers how or why questions, behavior cannot be manipulated, when the context is inseparable from the phenomenon, and also that context is a relevant aspect of the phenomenon. Snow and Trom (2002) illustrate the use of case study methodology for studying social movements. For these authors, case studies of social movements typically include “investigation and analysis of an instance or variant of some bounded social phenomenon” (p. 147). In this research, the use of cultural historical activity theory provides a bounded instance, while the shared object of the activity system means there is a phenomenon (on-farm apprenticeship) common within the study population. They also point out that case studies “seek to generate a richly detailed and ‘thick’ elaboration of the phenomenon studied” (p. 147). This research, by utilizing methods of thick description in the tradition of Geertz (1973) found within Carspecken’s (1996) critical ethnographic methods, the case study is bound to generate this elaboration. Snow and Trom also write that case studies involve “the use and triangulation of multiple methods or procedures that include but are not limited to qualitative techniques” (p. 147). Because multiple qualitative techniques will be

employed as part of the critical ethnography repertoire (participant observation, interviews, document analysis), the research embodies this aspect of case study methodology. Baxter and Jack (2008) write that case study research is fundamentally a constructivist undertaking. So, case study methodology adds to this research the orientation towards studying a phenomenon within a bounded instance, which critical ethnography alone would not emphasize. Both case study and ethnography, however, independently stress the generation of a thick description through multiple qualitative methodologies.

Also, according to Creswell (2009), case study methodology differs from purely ethnographic methods in that it does not seek to understand the entire inner workings of an entire, intact cultural unit, but rather seeks to study “an event, a program, and activity, or more than one individual” (p. 212). Because this research seeks only to understand the phenomenon behind one discrete on-farm apprenticeship activity system within AAMs, and not the overarching culture within which it is embedded, this research is best as a case study, albeit employing methods found within the realm of critical ethnography. So, the hybridization of these two research methodologies will benefit this research from the boundaries that a case study provides, while allowing for the multiplicity of perspectives seen through critical ethnographic methods.

Reflexivity Statement

In any qualitative research, transparency and reflexivity on the part of the researcher is essential to quality work (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). By becoming a part of the activity system as a participant observer, one’s subjectivities may affect one’s socially constructed understandings of the workings of the activity system. As in any social system, I as a participant will be constantly in the fray of transactions, enactment of social scripts, symbolic interactions related to physical

bodies, and other social positionings, which will inevitably affect my subjective impressions within the study. I also bring with me previous perceptions from my life history, which colors my understandings of the world around me. So, I will critically examine these symbolic meanings throughout the research, first with my own careful reflexivity statement at the outset of data collection, but then during data collection, through a continually reflective process, which will involve re-analyzing my field journal. The reflexivity through this research, however, is an ongoing process, informed by Knox's (1996) ideas of critical reflection. For Knox, critical reflection is an ongoing, continual process toward a deeper and more nuanced understanding. As Madison (2006) writes of critical ethnographic methods:

As critical ethnographers, we do not hide our selfhood and subjectivity, transparency is not an issue, nor do we make ourselves the primary subject of our own study. Instead, we are critical and self-reflexive of how we think about our positionality and the implications of our thoughts and judgments. We don't stop at our mirror reflections, but recognize the resonances that ripple and expand to a thinking about thinking – a metasignification – that inherently takes our contemplations and meanings further out, beyond our own mirrored gaze (p. 322).

Creswell (2009) calls the initial researcher reflexivity statement a type of “self-disclosure by the researcher about his or her stance in the study” (p. 262). I aim to be continually reflexive in my research, so that I may challenge hidden assumptions that affect the study and allow the reader to understand how my positionality relative to the subject matter may affect my methodologies, including my ultimate inferences from the data. I begin this process through my initial reflexivity statement here.

I choose to undertake research on issues of alternative agrifood and farm labor because of my own communitarian values, my positionality within the history of agriculture and the alternative agrifood discourse, and my own diverse experiences with paid work. I am a middle class white cis-woman who grew up a U.S. citizen, in the former-exurbs-now-suburbs of

Washington, DC. I was formerly color blind. As most white people in the U.S., I was socialized not to think about race, that thinking about race is an act of racism, and that as a ‘good white person,’ I should seek not to see color. Anything else, I was taught, was ‘racist,’ and therefore wrong. I, like the white people around me, had the privilege of ignoring this as an issue. I can still recall the feelings of starting to come out of my color blindness. I took on a job as an AmeriCorp volunteer working for the Department of Social Services in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, in late 2007. Here, we openly discussed the racial backgrounds of the youth we worked with, and I was instantly outside of my comfort zone. I recall not knowing how to talk about the youth, navigating feelings of “not being racist,” and not wanting to see race. The desire to not ‘be racist’ was the hardest hurdle. With the patience of my helpful coworkers, I stumbled my way into what I hope is a greater understanding of some of the issues.

I only connected the constructed nature of race and gender after arriving in graduate school. Now, I understand these identity markers as social constructs, which are performative and fluid as an assemblage, rather than biologically determined characteristics. At the same time, if race or gender are constructs, they are durable and reproductive of repressive regimes. The dismantling of racism requires that white people like myself get over their uncomfortability, take risks to talk about the issues, and do the hard work to dismantle racism in our society. In this vein, my research attempts to deconstruct meanings surrounding race, and I hope that my scholarship will be relevant to the ongoing project of dismantling racism.

Our family story tracks national trends of agriculture, as the best farmland is lost to development in the exurbs of major cities (Ahearn, 2003; Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin; 2005). My personal experience with our family’s collective yearning for the old family farmland, lost to suburban housing development when I was young, makes me incapable of forgetting

environmental initiatives or land tenure issues from my work, and strengthens my devotion to AAMs as a movement practitioner. I also have an insider-outsider orientation with what Marx and Engels (1848/1967) would term, the struggle of the proletariat. My mother was a unionized grocery store clerk as I was growing up, and was pushed out as the store phased out union workers. I worked for nearly a decade in seasonal, minimum wage, and clerical jobs. I have worked on three farms, with clear structural inequities, one where the farmers were on food stamps. I thus feel have some lived experience that gives me a measure of perspective on labor justice, including how the structural conditions in agriculture are ill-suited to social justice in labor, as Pilgeram (2011) points out.

As I reflect on my experiences nowadays as a scholar, I realize how I have benefitted from my privileged background, throughout these experiences. DuBois (1903/2008) voiced the fundamental issues with levels of privilege, asking “why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in my own house?” Reflecting on this, I am aware that my privilege affords me the luxury of never being compelled to ask this question. I am moved by Nwankwo’s (2003) writings about the insider-outsider status of Zora Neale Hurston, who belonged to various groups throughout her career, and often embodied multiple layers as insider (as a black woman from the rural South, while studying the same), and occasionally an outsider (in the Caribbean, being included with the elite, as a U.S. citizen). I feel that I also have both elements of insider-outsider status as informed by my past experiences, and female gender identity.

As I continue with this research, I seek to dialogue with those in the tradition of Allen (2008) and Slocum (2007), in order to challenge social justice elements within alternative agrifood spaces. I seek to use my perspectives as a springboard to understand the larger picture of how farm labor fits within AAMs. I struggle, as I mentioned above, to retain a firm hold on

individual independence and autonomy in balance with communitarian ideals. As both insider and outsider (Smith, 2013; Nwankwo, 2003), I seek to be fully reflexive in my research, in order to allow the past to inform my perspective.

Research Questions

So, with a firm understanding of my paradigmatic stance and reflexive approach to the research, I pose my research questions, and explain my rationale behind the questions. To address the complexity of the interaction between AAM discourse, values and belief systems, farm labor, and social reproduction, I ask:

5. What mediating sociomaterial tools and artifacts inform on-farm apprenticeship learning within this activity system?
6. How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system?
7. How does AAM discourse and technique articulate into sociomaterial outcomes in this activity system?
8. What are the social, cultural, and political implications of cognitive praxis and identification processes within this on-farm apprenticeship activity system?

Each question has been underscored by an understanding of the state of the scholarly literature on on-farm apprenticeships and alternative agrifood discourse, and informed by an understanding of the theoretical framework as outlined in Chapter Three. The below table helps to explain the rationale behind each of the research questions and demonstrate their fit into the theoretical framework.

Table 2: Theoretical Rationale for Research Questions

| Research Questions | Background Literature | Relevant Theoretical Constructs |
|---|---|---|
| 1. What mediating sociomaterial tools and artifacts inform on-farm apprenticeship learning within this activity system? | Materials as socially mediated constructs (Fenwick, 2003); Dirty work constructs (Simpson, Hughes, & Slutskaya (2016) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools/Artifacts/ Sociomaterial (CHAT) • Division of Labor (CHAT) • Cognitive praxis, technique |
| 2. How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system? | Farm labor justice discourses (Allen, 2010; Guthman, 2008; Shreck, Getz & Feenstra, 2006; Holmes, 2013; Sbicca, 2013; UFW, 2011); Bourdieu’s (1984) expressions of class habitus. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject (CHAT) • Identity (ID) • Rules (CHAT) • Division of Labor (CHAT) |
| 3. How does AAM discourse and technique articulate into sociomaterial outcomes in this activity system? | Reproducing structural determinants in Marx’s (1848) social reproduction; Althusser’s (1970) ideological state apparatus. Also, cultural work of education through Freire (1970), Giroux (1982), Fraser (1989), Gaventa (1982), Macedo (1994), Central themes of AAMs discourse include four questions: environmental, agrarian, food quality, egalitarian, as detailed by Constance, et al., (2014). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object (CHAT) • Socially Reproductive Factors (MARX) • Community (CHAT) • Outcome of Activity (CHAT) • Structural Determinants (MARX) |
| 4. What are the social, cultural, and political implications of cognitive praxis and identification processes within this on-farm apprenticeship activity system? | Role of ideology or paradigm of social movement discourse in learning (Eyerman & Jameson, 1991; Snow, 2010). Co-construction of identity within radical forms of sociocultural learning (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Lave, 1988), Identification (Hall, 1996). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject (CHAT) • Collective Action Framing (NSM) • Rules (CHAT) • Cultural Work/Education (SL) • Identity (ID) |

In the table, we see how each research question relates to the current scholarship within the literature, and which theoretical constructs may best describe each concern.

Research Process

For reasons described in the preceding sections, this research was conducted as a critical ethnographic case study. In this section, I outline the logistics of the research process, including the collection of data through participant observation, interviews, and document collection, and I describe the process of data analysis, compiling datasets and drawing inferences therefrom.

Case selection was conducted intentionally in order to select an exemplary case of a connected group of actors engaged in on-farm apprenticeship activity through a local mediating AAM-oriented organization. During the spring of 2016, I engaged as a program participant in a nonprofit organization that mediates on-farm apprenticeship activity through supplementary educational programming and technical support. During this engagement, I met several farmers who host apprentices, and researched several more through the website for apprentices, developing a pool of eligible participants. I recruited six of these farms at which I conducted field visits to gather data as a participant observer. I coordinated relevant aspects of the research with the program staff of the mediating organization. The mediating organization is important because in order to study an activity system, the research participants will ideally belong to a common group, have a shared object, and a common discourse, and this means participants will necessarily be involved in AAMs as a recruitment criterion. The involvement in a locally mediating organization allows shared development of collective movement identity, collective action framings, and other identification processes through social interaction, to varying degrees. The organization serves as a unifying force for the community of farmers, on-farm apprentices, and others it brings together. The locally mediating organization and the farms are located within and surrounding Asheville, NC.

For the purposes of this research, an on-farm apprentice is an adult individual that learns agriculture, where the apprenticeship takes place on a farm, during a time-delimited agreement with an expert farmer, where the apprentice is fully immersed in the learning experience, for a specific duration, often (though not necessarily) through a residential stay. Because those who qualify are adults, this study focused on adult learners, more than 18 years of age. Farmers are the on-farm hosts, supervisors, and educators in this arrangement.

The unit of analysis for this research was the full activity system of a connected network of actors, including representatives of the nonprofit organization, farmers, farm workers, and on-farm apprentices affiliated (in various ways) with that nonprofit organization. I collected data throughout the 2016 agricultural season, May-October. Forms of data included participant observations, interviews, and written and/or printed content.

Carspecken (1996) outlines a step-by-step plan for which a critical ethnography may be conducted. Because this is a case study, and merely employing ethnographic methods, I did not intend to follow Carspecken's exact research plan exactly, but instead I derived the benefits of each of his recommendations. He starts with a preliminary stage, in which research questions are generated, types of information needed to answer questions is generated, and the researcher's own value orientation has been interrogated, which was ongoing throughout the research. The below rough outline of a research plan is adapted from Carspecken's five stages of critical ethnography (pp. 41-43), which entail the rest of the critical ethnography process, which provides a rough guide for my research. The below table details how my research centered around Carspecken's five stages, and my specific process for each stage.

Table 3: Stages of Research Process, grounded in Carspecken's (1996) Five Stages

| Carspecken's Stages of Critical Ethnography | Carspecken's Recommendations for Each Stage | How Research Proceeded During the Research Stage |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Compile Primary Record | Observe activity system and take field notes, "until you find yourself recording the same basic routines over and over again" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 49). | The first field visits were devoted to shadowing on-farm apprentice participants, doing what they do, as if undergoing on-the-job training. |
| 2. Ethnographic observation | Only "monologic." Observe only, listen and limit participation, think in participant's own words. Construct a primary record of thick description. | Throughout the entire data collection process, I used a field note format to guide my gaze and encourage listening. |
| | Construct field notes for as short a segment as possible (as per Bailey, 2007; Carspecken, 1996) | During days in the field, I normally wrote field notes at the end of the day, as that was the only time my hands were free. |
| | Keep field journal notes including not-so-thick description to track impressions, surrounding locale, feelings. | My field journal included not-so-thick descriptions to track impressions, surrounding locale, feelings, to guide my observations. |
| 3. Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis | Make the observed, nondiscursive into language. | After first round of field visits, I took several days to review data and synthesized a list of preliminary observations and further questions to be checked further. |
| 4. Dialogical Data Collection | Interview and/or focus groups, based on preliminary reconstructive analysis | After my second and third round of field visits, I scheduled interviews with each participant. |
| 5. Discover System Relations | Create detailed description of system relations, using CHAT and new social movement theory as a guide. | Analyzed all data and performed qualitative semi-open coding based on constructs of theoretical framework, allowing for emergent codes. Summarized data. |
| | Employ theoretical frameworks | Fit summaries of coded data and inferences onto the CHAT diagram and evaluated constructs, allowing for emergent ideas. |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Explain hidden or tacit elements within data, such as power dynamics, unspoken objects of activity, discontinuities of subject-to-object activity | Semi-open coding scheme included constructs of power dynamics, asymmetries, and hidden structural determinants, which were factored into inferences and mapped out as described above. |
|--|---|--|

With this set of activities above, as guided by Carspecken (1996), I had a basic plan for conducting my research. As suggested above, I implemented Carspecken’s recommendations, but modified them slightly to fit my circumstances. The major difference is that Carspecken recommends observation and listening first before fully engaging socially with the participants in a more interactive way. Because I was in the field as a participant observer, I was unable to avoid engaging with the research participants. The benefit of Carspecken’s recommendation to observe first, then conduct preliminary analysis, then engage, is to allow time for the researcher to pause and reflect on the content so the researcher may more appropriately and reflexively engage. Thus, I modified the plan to faithfully preserve what benefits I could from this approach, in that I analyzed the data preliminarily after initial participant observation. Also, my process differed from Carspecken’s in the clarification of data analysis to understand power. Instead of intensively analyzing truth claims and discourse in the tradition of Habermas’ (1984) theory of communicative action, I included constructs of power and social reproduction within my CHAT-based semi-open coding scheme. By doing so, I derive the benefits of Carspecken’s power analysis to gain understanding of how values and beliefs shaped knowledge co-creation and social reproduction, but am able to be more specific to my theoretical framework of CHAT.

Research Timeline

Table 4: Research Timeline

| Research Steps | Start Date | End Date |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Defend Dissertation Research Proposal | May 2016 | May 2016 |
| Obtain IRB Approval to Conduct Research | May 2016 | May 2016 |
| Formally Recruit Participants | May 2016 | June 2016 |
| Data Collection: Participant Observation | May 2016 | September 2016 |
| Data Collection: Interviews | June 2016 | October 2016 |
| Data Collection: Document Collection | May 2016 | October 2016 |
| Transcribing Interviews, Collating Data from Field Notes, Field Journals, Interviews, Documents | June 2016 | October 2016 |
| Qualitative Coding | June 2016 | December 2016 |
| Data Meta-analysis | October 2016 | January 2017 |
| Report back to host farmer educators and local mediating organization(s) | December 2016 | September 2017 |
| Write up Chapters 5-6 of Dissertation (Findings, Discussion and Conclusion) | December 2016 | September 2017 |
| Defend Dissertation | | October 2017 |

Data Collection

Data collection occurred throughout the course of the 2016 agricultural season. I conducted data collection through participant observation on six different farms, throughout May to October. Also, I extended the invitation to participate in an interview to any participant in the activity system. I also collected data from written documents surrounding the apprenticeship experience.

Participants were actively recruited for both the participant observation and interviews. Criteria for inclusion of participants in this study was limited to individuals more than 18 years of age, who had been involved in an on-farm apprenticeship, on-farm internship, or other similar experiential educational programming on a farm in the Asheville, North Carolina surrounding area. Participants may have been involved as a host farmer, an apprentice, a professional agricultural service provider or educator, or in another agricultural role where they served or

interacted with on-farm apprenticeship learning programs. Because, as part of the theoretical background that involves an activity system, this study sought to research a specific model of how agricultural service provider organizations may serve apprenticeship programs taking place on individual farms, criteria for inclusion also included involvement in a specific educational programming effort that served on-farm apprenticeship participants, centered around a monthly workshop series that supplements on-farm apprenticeship learning, revolving around one nonprofit organization but including other partner organizations. Thus, my inclusion criteria specify that eligible farms for inclusion must be participants in the monthly workshop series.

As Corbin and Strauss (2008) have recommended, data should be collected “until theoretical saturation takes place” (p. 324), which is when a body of information can address each construct within a theoretical framework.

Datasets included:

- Field Notes (Observational and Impressional)
- Interview Transcripts
- Materials and artifacts from mediating organization (web-based materials, curriculum, promotional materials, etc.)

I collected data in order to fill in the understanding of how the complete activity system functions towards its ultimate end, and understandings have been constructed for all factors at work for the entire theoretical framework. Theoretical saturation was ensured based on my field note template, which prompted me to make observations around all constructs of CHAT.

Selection of Research Site

I chose Asheville, North Carolina, as the population center for this critical ethnographic case study for several reasons. There are relatively few studies of farm labor in North Carolina, and on the Mid-Atlantic East Coast of the United States, more generally (Erwin, 2016). With several noteworthy exceptions (for example, Erwin, 2016; Gray, 2013), few ethnographic studies

have been conducted to examine farm labor in the Eastern U.S. At the same time, the U.S. Southeastern states have seen a rise in the importance of farm labor during the past 20 years (Erwin, 2016). So, while the geographic area is understudied, it is relevant for the social justice implications of farm labor.

Asheville is also a marketing center for the farms located in surrounding counties, and is home to four weekly farmers markets, three food co-ops, and many health food stores. Asheville is also a site of a recent upswing in culinary tourism that celebrates locally grown products (Long 2010). The city is also home to the main offices of several local food nonprofits, one of which operates a popular program to support on-farm apprentices. Thus, I determined that Asheville was a site of significant AAM activity, with a good number of farms hosting on-farm apprentices that were in contact with one another, forming a networked learning community, for which cultural historical activity system theory would apply.

Participant Observation

A participant observer, simply put, “takes part in daily events while observing” (Bailey, 2007, p. 80). Madison (2006) describes the experience of participant observation as: “you not only do what the subject does, but you are intellectually, relationally, and emotionally invested in their symbol making practices and social strategies as you experience with them a range of yearnings and desires – co-performance is a doing with deep attention to and with others” (p. 323). Thus, as described above, I maintained reflexivity throughout the process. I intentionally arranged my social interactions to spend more energy listening than talking (as suggested by Bailey, 2007). That said, I stayed true to my authentic self in my co-performance alongside participants. I recorded data in the form of field notes, which took two forms: detailed observational notes, and general impressional notes. Both were recorded in a field journal. As

Corbin and Strauss (2008) write, a researcher must include general impressional notes, because theoretical insights are likely to occur in the field, and should be written down lest they be lost.

During participant observation, I performed the same (or similar) work as those in the activity system. I undertook work on the farm as directed. I attended monthly (in some cases, they were twice a month) workshops with participants. I traveled with them where they went, such as the farmers market, restaurants, parties, swimming holes, etc. I socially interacted and engaged with participants. There is a practical element to participant observation, in that farmwork and on-farm apprenticeship activity is mobile, so participating makes it easier for the researcher to shadow the participants. Also, my paradigmatic stance assumes that objectivity is an impossibility. My understanding of the activity was co-created with participants. This leads me to believe my understanding was deeper because I participated as well as observed.

Data sampling was a combination of purposeful sampling strategies that include criterion and theory-based criterion sampling (see Bailey, 2007, p. 65). Criterion sampling is based heavily on certain conditions for participants. Inclusion criteria involved participation in educational programming including a monthly workshop series, so recruitment will utilize the distribution lists of the agricultural service provider organizations that work together to coordinate the monthly workshop series. Theory-based sampling involves “selecting cases that manifest theoretical constructs of interest” (Bailey, 2007, p. 65). So, because I aimed for theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) brought about by theory-based sampling, I selected six diverse farm arrangements of farms within the area as participants. They varied in number of apprentices, work plans, etc., but they will all meet inclusion criteria. I recruited five farms through both a letter and a flyer, which resulted in a small snowball effect as one farm heard about the study through conversation with an apprentice at the monthly workshops. I emailed

both letter and flyer to possible participants, as they are listed on a public website of on-farm apprenticeship programs in the area. Also, I disseminated recruitment materials at public farmer events in which likely participants gathered. Individuals were asked to contact me via phone, email, or postal mail to discuss participation in the study. Recruitment for case studies occurred roughly between April 2016 and June 2016.

I then emailed or called the participant (depending on their mode of contacting the researcher) to introduce myself, and made arrangements for at least four farm visits with the farm research participant, as is convenient for each research participant. I phoned or emailed research participants no less than one week prior to the first farm visit. I shared the consent document with the participant no less than one week in advance. Each case study consisted of regular work days (excluding evenings). At the first farm visit, I shared the consent form with the research participant, and signed prior to data collection. I then worked alongside the team of apprentices as a participant observer, under the instruction of the farmers, as a regular apprentice would. I left the premises at the close of each work day, and wrote observational and impressional field notes in the field journal each evening. On the rare occasions when it was possible to write observational field notes during a mid-day break (i.e., lunch break) without making research participants feel uncomfortable, I did that as well. However, we normally shared lunch time together. I conducted participant observation data collection between May 2016 and December 2016.

I kept a record of participant observation in the form of field notes, recorded after each visit. I followed Bailey's (2007) guidance on how to keep field notes in a field journal, and followed a template for recording those observations. The field journal will include thick descriptions (as per Geertz, 1973), but also general impressions and environmental factors, and

be written each evening (as per Carspecken, 1996). I aimed to collect observed data until theoretical saturation occurred and all theoretical constructs were addressed within the data (as per Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2014). In order to ensure theoretical saturation, I used a field note template (for the observational notes). My template for observing data, as Bailey (2007, p. 84) suggests, guided me to make note of:

- Spaces
- Physical Objects
- Actors
- Act
- Activity
- Event
- Time
- Goals/Object
- Feelings
- Identification Processes?
- Rules or Structural Determinants?
- Cultural Work or Social Reproduction?

In order to achieve theoretical saturation based on CHAT and new social movement theory, I added “identification processes,” “rules or structural determinants,” and “cultural work or social reproduction.” I completed 53 days of observation, which included 37 days of farm labor alongside 19 on-farm apprentices on six separate farms. My field notes came to 59 pages of single-spaced, 12-point font text. Please see Table 5 for a summary of the farms on which I conducted participant observation.

Table 5: Summary of farm sites where I worked alongside apprentices

| Farm Code Name | Number of Apprentices | Type of Farm/Products | Live on Farm? | Pay/Stipend? |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Hecklers Hill | 6 | Organic mixed vegetables, sell at farmers market | No | Yes (hourly wage, \$6/hr) |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Rough Cut Ridge | 2 | Biodynamic mixed vegetables, herbs, greenhouse, sell wholesale | Yes (trailer) | Yes (\$150/wk) |
| Velvet Valley | 7 | Organic mixed vegetables, beef, chicken, wedding venue, sell at farmers market and CSA | Yes (barn rooms and buses) | Yes (\$600/mo) |
| Piping Peppers | 2 | Organic mixed vegetables, honey, chicken, wedding venue, campsites, farm camp, farm stand | Yes (trailer and cabin) | Unsure |
| Crackle Creek | 2 | Biodynamic mixed vegetables, sell at farmers market | Yes (cabin) | Unsure |
| Merry Mark | 1 | Mixed vegetables, sell at farmers market and direct to restaurants | Yes (trailer) | Yes, unsure amount |

Interviews

Although many understandings develop from observation, often, if a researcher wants to comprehend hidden meanings, tacit understandings, and unexpressed emotions, they must have a private conversation with participants (Bailey, 2007). Interviews are important to attain theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) within the data. Through listening to participants talk about their activity, I gained a deeper understanding of constructs such as identification processes, framings, cultural work, community, rules, and objects of their efforts. Bailey (2007) recommends aiming for a deeper understanding by making sure to interview those in the research setting coming from different perspectives and differently situated within the power dynamics of the activity system. For example, embedded, experienced farmers in the activity system talked about the activity differently than most of the apprentices, who were relative newcomers. So, I interviewed farmers, apprentices, and other educators involved in the activity system. Interviews (n=25) averaged 73 minutes.

According to Fontana and Frey (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), semi-structured interviews allow the researcher flexibility to respond to new ideas presented by the interviewee, while giving the interviewer some guiding questions to keep the conversation focused on the subject

matter under study. Because Babbie (2010) suggests that the interview questions be predetermined in order to critically reflect beforehand that there is no inherent bias in the wording of the question, I developed an interview questionnaire, which was piloted with a former on-farm apprentice in Spring 2016. However, true to the point of the semi-structured interview, the interview script was improvised slightly, in order to follow relevant strains of thought revealed throughout the interview. The topics for discussion, and the language used to ask the questions, however, remained firmly rooted in the interview protocol questions throughout all interviews. The following table 6 includes the interview protocol, and describes the rationale behind each question.

Table 6: Constructs Related to Research Questions and Interview Questions

| Construct and Theoretical Base | Research Question | Interview Questions |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject (CHAT) • Collective Action Framing (NSM) • Rules (CHAT) | 1. How do on-farm apprenticeship practitioners' values and belief systems affect their knowledge construction within on-farm apprenticeships? | 1. Please tell me in as much detail as possible how you came to be involved in agriculture. 1a. Where and what kind of surroundings did you grow up in? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject (CHAT) • Collective Action Framing (NSM) • Cultural Work/Education (CHAT) | a. How are central themes of AAM discourse (as described in Constance, et al, 2014), important for knowledge construction? | 2. What is your vision of the ideal food system? 2a. How does the way you think about the agrifood system affect how you are learning/farming? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject (CHAT) • Structural Determinants (CHAT) • Rules (CHAT) • Division of Labor (CHAT) | 2. How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system? | 3. How do you feel about laboring on the farm? 3a. Have you experienced challenges? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object (CHAT) • Socially Reproductive Factors (CHAT) • Community (CHAT) • Outcome of Activity (CHAT) • Structural Determinants (SL) | 3. What is socially reproduced within on-farm apprenticeship learning, and what structural conditions may result from the learning? | 4. What is the purpose of your on-farm apprenticeship work? 4a. What do you hope to achieve through this work? 4b. What do you think are the overall outcomes or results of the on-farm apprenticeship experience? |

Interviews (n=25) averaged 73 minutes. After a participant responded to the interview recruitment materials, a mutual time and place for the interview was verbally agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. I met the interviewee at a place of her/his choosing, or, if a face-to-face interview was not convenient for the interviewee, a phone interview was scheduled. All participants chose to be interviewed at the farm, with the exception of one, who was interviewed by phone. In that instance, I read aloud the consent form, informing the interviewee that

participation is entirely voluntary, that they were under no obligation to answer any question they do not choose to, and that they were free to leave at any time, for any reason. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted between May 2016 and October 2016. Transcripts of all of the interview audio-recordings are kept confidential in perpetuity and all identifying characteristics were removed from all resulting documents. I assigned pseudonyms to interview participants and to farms upon which I conducted participant observation.

Document Analysis

The nonprofit organization (and partnering organizations) that coordinate the monthly workshops and other supplementary educational programming for the on-farm apprenticeships have documents in the form of handouts for farmers, as well as less explicitly directive materials (websites, blogs, etc.). All of these materials were informative as to the way in which the local mediating organization is helping to interpret AAM values, what is being reified within official documents, and which knowledge systems are being reinforced. Thus, document analysis added an important dimension to understanding the reified, 'official' stance of those centrally placed within the activity system

I collected publicly available documents (n=407) from the local mediating organization, such as web-based information, promotional and educational materials, etc. I made a special effort to ensure that I collected all written materials that were available to the farmer host/educators, apprentices, and other participants. These included 332 web-based communications, 27 handouts collected at workshops/conferences, 13 mail pages from the local mediating organization, 3 books, and 1 magazine featured prominently in conversations. I took care to record in my field notes how each document was regarded and used by each participant,

as well as any interactions with the content of documents in my field notes, to add richness to the document analysis. I compiled all documents with the overall dataset and coded them with the same (or similar) coding scheme as field notes and interview transcripts.

Plan Modifications

While the above details the precise research process, there were several ways in which the plan was flexible enough to allow for modifications. Qualitative inquiry, and ethnography in particular, requires that the researcher be comfortable with spontaneity, ready to improvise when unexpected things arise (Bailey, 2007; Thomas, 1993). While planning for the improvisation and responsiveness that embody good qualitative research, a researcher is, of course, beholden to others (advisory committees, co-researchers, funders, ethical review boards, etc.). Nonetheless, deviation from official plans is a typical experience in ethnography (Fine, 1993).

Qualitative researchers must often be flexible in order to take advantage of opportunities (Bailey, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Powdermaker, 1966; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). As Bailey has suggested, “rigid rules are ineffective for many aspects of the research process” (p. 12). However, they must often stay accountable to other actors who are involved, yet may be external to the everyday research process, such as funders, dissertation committees, co-researchers, ethical review boards, etc. This constitutes an inherent tension within most qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). How do field researchers navigate this tension, and what strategies might they employ to mediate this predicament? Researchers must plan to be a bit fluid, while remaining accountable to such external actors.

Tracy (2010) writes that a qualitative researcher must handle “unexpected twists and turns” (p. 842). I made several distinct changes from my original plan during the course of the research. First, I had planned to conduct participant observation on four farms, rather than six.

However, at the outset of the season, it appeared that I had been successful in scheduling participant observation on only three farms (Heckler's Hill, Rough Cut Ridge, and Velvet Valley). I continued to work on these throughout the season. A few weeks after the start of data collection, one farm contacted me (Crackle Creek), and I started working there mid-season.

When I showed up at a fifth farm (Piping Peppers) at the beginning of the season, the farmer was absent and the lone apprentice who was present was not expecting me, but later rescheduled me to start midway through the season. They seemed to feel obligated to have me work. At a sixth farm (Merry Mark), one of the apprentices from Rough Cut Ridge started working there midway through the season and learned about the project through another apprentice, so the farmer contacted me to see if I would like to start mid-season. So, I had to improvise the scheduling of my days of participant observation to maximize my time on farms and to observe new apprenticeship programs.

At the same time, the local mediating organization was less involved in the research than I had planned for. They remained supportive, but my inroads were seemingly dead ends, and my offers to meet to discuss how we might collaborate and make the research mutually beneficial were met with slow inertia, and I became convinced that they simply had very busy schedules typical for an active nonprofit organization. They were, however, welcoming about my using the listserv to recruit participants, and committed to having me conduct research at all of their events. They recommended individuals I should talk to and offered to help recruit farm participants (I already had a few signed up, however), and offered to help get consent materials signed by all participants at the workshops (which turned out not to be necessary, according to the IRB). I interviewed three of the board members and staff, as well. They later welcomed my write-up of findings, and disseminated it on their listserv and at their conference. However, the

primary rationale for centering the study pool of participants around a local mediating organization was that participants were in contact with each other, went to the same events, shared knowledge and had social interaction, as per Fenwick (2003) and Carspecken (1996). This was certainly the case, and the support of the local mediating organization was more than adequate to ensure that my study pool of participants met this criterion, to be considered an appropriate activity system, especially since the focus of the research questions concerned activity on farms and in public spheres.

Serendipity, is a chance event that provides insight through the “sagacity” (Fine and Deegan, 1996, p. 2), openness, and acuity of the researcher. Fine and Deegan (1996) created a succinct definition for serendipity in ethnography. I believed that serendipity was at play in my research when I was invited by participants to several get-togethers, including one large party that took up an entire field, and two small get-togethers. This allowed me to see the practitioners in a less formal setting. Also, I had not anticipated to interview as many practitioners as I did. In the end, I had twenty-five interviewees, which happened due to a serendipitous snowball effect, as participants reminded each other to follow up with me to be interviewed.

Fine (1993), in a classic article (as labeled by Madison, 2011), reveals “ten lies” (p. 267) he purports that ethnographers tell in order to complete their field work. He includes breaches of candor, and thus calls for honesty in writing. He recommends ethnographers “move oneself into the center of one’s ethnography” (p. 283). The “reflexive turn,” the move to place the self-aware researcher within the web of social relations of the research setting, has gradually developed only in the past few decades (Foley, 2002). Based on the writings of Christians (2005), Lincoln (2005), and House (2005), one strategy to retain flexibility in the qualitative plan is to lay bare the foundation, to be explicit about the original rationale behind the research (Oldfather & West,

1994). Because often ethnography assumes one will head out to a distant, faraway place to conduct an ethnography (Caputo, 2000), it is not always mentioned that one could plan in reflective breaks from immersion in the field. So, as recommended by Mertens and Wilson (2012) I employed a “reflection and action” (p. 229) cycle, and informed by Carspecken’s (1996) five stages of critical ethnography, each night, as I was reviewing the events of the day and writing field notes, I was focused on the original intent of the research, rather than being caught in ‘going through the motions’ of an ethnographic case study. Natural reflective breaks were built in as I traveled between Asheville and Blacksburg, as well. Ethnographic research methods depend on flexibility, and this study was able to take advantage of a plan that was flexible enough to improvise and reap the benefits of serendipitous events and “unexpected twists and turns” (Tracy, 2010, p. 842).

Data Analysis Process

All data was qualitative and was coded using a semi-open coding scheme. Analysis of all three datasets (field notes, interviews, documents) was conducted through a process of thematic coding, which links predetermined theoretical constructs with instances of qualitative data, through a process of tagging text (Peräklyä, 2005). To that end, text segmentation was conducted by the identification of meaning units, the discrete series of words that conveys a particular thought or meaning. A meaning unit was considered to be a line of text, multiple lines, one or more sentences or sentence fragments, a picture in a document, a description of a nonverbal gesture, physical object, or anything else that conveyed a discretely identifiable theme or interpretation. Meaning units within the documents were assigned one, more than one, or no codes, and codes overlapped.

A codebook (see appendix) was developed using theoretical constructs within the theoretical framework of Chapter Three, and revised in response to emergent themes throughout the coding process. I started coding for themes of AAM discourse, activity system dimensions from CHAT, and markers denoting status/privilege (race, class, gender, and education level). The main revisions to the coding scheme were the addition of constructs of identification processes from Hall's (1996) conceptualization, and the addition of codes for capitalistic/noncapitalistic themes and productivist/nonproductivist themes. These were added in response to emergent ideas that I saw repeatedly while coding. I noticed that my coding scheme was previously insufficient to capture inferences from these important themes. I then recoded all previously coded material using the final coding scheme. As the final code scheme, there were five main coding families: AAM areas of discourse, CHAT dimensions of analysis, identification elements, capitalism and structural, and essentialized categories to help analyze layers of privilege. In this way, the codebook was refined and revisited throughout the coding process to capture emergent themes, as MacQueen, et al (1998) suggests, and previously coded documents were subsequently revisited and recoded. All text will be coded in Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. Coded quotations were then loaded into an Excel spreadsheet, reread, and reviewed systematically to infer findings from the study. Appendix D contains the final version of the codebook.

Because I intended to perceive the phenomenon through analysis of different types of data, I used what Greene (2007) refers to as a complementary strengths stance. In this approach, multiple datasets are analyzed together in order to understand the phenomenon. The datasets were combined at the stage of analysis (specifically, before coding), as they were loaded into Atlas.ti and coded using the same code scheme. However, I retained information to mark data for

which dataset it came from. In other words, at the inference stage, I treated field note data differently than interview data, which was treated differently than document data. In brief, I considered all as co-constructed reality of my own learning within context, and all types of knowledge intersect and overlap. However, field notes were considered for more tacit forms of knowledge, as I observed, as an insider-outsider (Smith, 2013), many unspoken realities (many of which were never addressed through any other data). Interview data was considered professed, performative reality – acknowledged and spoken truths, often in the midst of negotiation and ‘figuring out.’ Document analysis added a layer of expressed, privileged forms of knowledge, which were reified, within the local mediating organization and/or, in many cases, AAMs in general. Actors responded to these received forms of knowledge in many ways, which was a generative aspect to use of the complementary strengths stance in dataset mixing. The interaction between the datasets created a much thicker description (Geertz, 1973) of this activity system. Multiple layers of knowledge and realities emerged from the different datasets.

Measuring Quality of the Research

Because this was a qualitative study, the issue of how to judge the quality and/or rigor of the research must be addressed. The issue is hotly debated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2014). There is no clear consensus in qualitative research as to how to treat the terms often used to describe rigor: *objectivity*, *generalizability*, *validity*, and *reliability*, nor are there exactly parallel terms for qualitative research (Rolfe, 2006). In essence, these terms remain as vestiges of a historically shared discursive lineage with quantitative research. While many acknowledge that these constructs, like vestigial organs, may not serve a purpose and may even be harmful (think, *ruptured appendix*), others want to resurrect these concepts to give them a new place in the body

of qualitative research. In this section, I discuss these terms, and other evaluation quality constructs, and explain my stance concerning them.

In order to understand perspectives on research quality, I first would like to situate qualitative research. Qualitative research is often understood, in shorthand, as “using words... rather than numbers” (Creswell, 2009, p. 3). It is often placed as diametrically opposed to quantitative research (e.g., Creswell, 2009; Yilmaz, 2013), and literature has often said it is essentially any research that does not use quantitative methods (Yilmaz, 2013). However, qualitative research need not be seen as the opposite of quantitative research, nor defined in terms of what it is not. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) create a more comprehensive envisioning of qualitative research, when they say:

Qualitative Research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations... At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Drawing from this definition, I understand that I, as a qualitative researcher, am an integral part of the research, representing the living world through symbolic representation (in my case, language), in social contexts with others. I also understand that while qualitative inquiry tends to use certain practices, methodologies, and tools, it is more a way of meaning making, a way of understanding the world. Rather than a set of methodologies, I therefore see qualitative inquiry as a perspective or approach one takes to interpreting the world.

For this reason, I find it difficult to use terms like *objectivity*, *generalizability*, *validity*, and *reliability*, that herald from quantitative methodologies. Use of these terms perpetuates the misconstrual that qualitative research stands as opposite (and thus similar) to quantitative

research (Rolfe, 2006). Luckily, many different perspectives on this issue exist in the literature, which give us rich fodder for discussion. I shall touch on some of the highlights, below.

Objectivity

It is a commonly held belief within positivist and postpositivist research paradigms that we might perform research with objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Objectivity is defined, within these paradigms, as the removal of bias on the part of the researcher(s), and is considered the hallmark of good research (Singh, 2007). Singh also states that objectivity is opposite to subjectivity, which, in the discourses that valorize objectivity as part of rigor, are cast as researcher bias, opinions, and values. In turn, if subjectivity is detected in these discourses, the research and researcher are deemed of poor quality.

However, as Carspecken (1996) writes, “‘objective science’ has become a political battleground” (p. 7). While some qualitative researchers also view objective, value-free research as good research, many do not (Bailey, 2007). Becker (1966), as an early voice on objectivity, said in his presidential address to the Society for the Study of Social Problems, said, “there is no position from which sociological research can be done that is not biased in one or another way...” (p. 245). Guba and Lincoln (2005) provide a thorough discussion of their perspective that objectivity is a chimera, a mythical beast that may be imagined, but never embodied in reality. They argue that the only way to retain rigor is to recognize the researcher as human, research as value-laden (rather than value-free), and maintain full transparency, reflexivity, and acknowledgement of one’s values, throughout the research process.

The notion of objectivity is indeed highly problematic in qualitative research. Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi (2008) criticize objectivity as white logic, as the use of ill-defined categories, such as race, and statistical manipulation of these categories create illusions of causation, rather

than recognizing that the categories are social constructs and findings are socially constructed “as if the emperor had clothes” (p. 9). Singh (2007), who espouses the notion of objective sociological research in his textbook on the subject, even says, “the only way to remove interviewer bias is to provide rigorous training followed by field exercise” (p. 84). This idea that bias – a.k.a. subjectivity – can be removed from researchers through an ‘objectivity boot camp’ of sorts does not acknowledge the essence of researchers as human beings. Humans, as social beings with inseparable culture and inherent value systems, cannot cease to be human for the purposes of conducting research, and must embrace their humanity in the field. Creswell (2012) states as a challenge in ethnography that “there is a possibility that the researcher will ‘go native’ and be unable to complete or *be compromised* [emphasis added] in the study” (p. 96). Again, this notion indicates some sort of functionalist, transactional ideal of the researcher, and that researchers are somehow different and separate as an isolated observer, instead of recognizing that researchers, like all humans, exist as humans only socially with others. In short, the objectivity construct maintains the myth that the humanity can be somehow muted for purposes of research, which is problematic in social research.

Generalizability

The term *generalizability* also heralds from quantitative research traditions (Flick, 2014). Within quantitative research, the inquiry is evaluated to be of high rigor if findings are *generalizable*, meaning findings are applicable to a broad range of contexts other than the setting in which research was conducted (Singh, 2007). In this vein, generalizability is obtained through certain practices (such as sampling techniques) and statistical tests. However, as Corbin and Strauss remind us, “generalization is not the purpose of qualitative research” (p. 319), and especially not in ethnography. Thomas (1993) clarifies that ethnographers don’t assume that

“what we find in one population holds true for all other populations and situations” (p. 64).

Ethnography, instead, situates findings within a particular context full of detailed, thick description (Geertz, 1973), from which we, and other scientists and practitioners, may draw inferences and thus find the information helpful in our work or understandings (Flick, 2014).

There are, however, a handful of qualitative researchers who do use the construct of generalization. Creswell (2009), for example, redefines generalization for qualitative research, to be called *qualitative generalization*, because findings are not intended to apply directly to other contexts, but learning may be derived from studies and then utilized in other contexts (Creswell, 2009). Maxwell and Chmiel (2014) write that two basic kinds of generalizability exist, “*statistical generalization* and *analytic generalization* [emphasis added]” (p. 540). Since qualitative research does not employ tests within statistics to attempt to prove generalizability (as in statistical generalization), analytic generalization is applicable. Analytic generalization comprises of using theory to cross-examine cases and/or study phenomena, to determine if the theory holds. In the same vein, Flick (2014) advocates for *theoretical generalizability*, in which case the research findings, such as a model generated or suggestions for practice, may be applicable in another context.

Validity

Quantitative researchers define *validity* as the ability of a measurement to measure what it is believed by researchers to measure (Singh, 2007, p. 77). Qualitative researchers also use the term validity, and have many different definitions of validity, while others are biased against use of the terms validity and reliability in qualitative research, as they carry with them “too many quantitative implications” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 301). Creswell (2009) uses the term qualitative validity to mean that the researcher employs particular techniques to “check for

accuracy” (p. 190) of findings through comparisons with other findings, literature, or other means. Saukko (2005), within the field of cultural studies, espouses three distinct types of validity: *contextual*, *dialogic*, and *self-reflexive*. Contextual validity looks for verification of findings in the social reality (in the materialist sense), while dialogic looks for confirmation within the interactions between actors in the research process, and self-reflexive validity looks for confirmation within one’s own monologically generated data and understandings.

From the critical camp, Carspecken (1996) indicates, however, that a realist stance is not necessary for validity to be an applicable construct. Carspecken (1996) writes, “The certainty commonly experienced with visual perception should not be a taken-for-granted basis for [critical] epistemology; yet it is such a basis in mainstream conceptions of validity, reliability, and data interpretation. Critical epistemology does not use perception as a root metaphor, and that is one of its many strengths” (p. 15-16). As Carspecken (1996) would have it, “critical epistemology focuses on validity more than truth, although criticalists *tend to* [emphasis added] agree on the existence of a single objective reality that can only be represented in language and symbol systems mediated by power relations” (p. 57). Habermas (1984), as interpreted by Carspecken (1996), states that research findings, or any truth claim, may be deemed valid if the truth claims sufficiently earn consensus within a cultural group, based on universal standards of communication. The focus is not so much on the objective truth as it is the communicated consensus of what is believed to be true through series of *valid* (not necessarily *true*) statements, which are in turn influenced by power dynamics. Becker (1966) long ago spoke to a similar point, when he explained that what we experience as truth is often, essentially, a “hierarchy of credibility” (p. 240), where we unconsciously validate those in positions of power. He elaborates, “if [a sociologist] fails to consider the questions [subordinates] raise, he will be

working on the side of the officials” (p. 245). Thus, put another way, we may never know the truth (as one might think from a realist stance), but we can still determine if a truth claim is valid dialogically. Often these claims are influenced by power dynamics. This constitutes a different definition, albeit related, from other forms of the validity construct in qualitative research.

Reliability

Within the discourses of quantitative research, *reliability* is the ability of a measurement instrument to measure the same thing repeatedly with the same consistency (Singh, 2007, p. 77). Because qualitative researchers generally see little merit in the exact repeatability of their research, nor think it possible, relatively little attention has been paid to use of this term. Creswell (2009), nevertheless, defines *qualitative reliability* to be that the researcher’s approach remains “consistent across different researchers and different projects” (p. 190), Creswell bases his perspective on qualitative reliability heavily on the work of Gibbs (2007), who gives a detailed description of possible ways qualitative researchers may promote reliability by checking for consistency in transcriptions, throughout the coding process, and checking for interrater reliability. These measures, however, seem to me quite labor-intensive for the slight increase in rigor. For example, a researcher may not be consistent across projects, but through self-reflexivity, is aware that s/he is enacting structures that are expressed differently within the research setting (Irwin, 2006), or a transcript that is chock-full of errors may still be coded and interpreted astutely.

Qualitative Frameworks to Understand Research Quality

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have reported that “a legitimation crisis” is underway within qualitative research, which asks, “How are qualitative studies to be evaluated?” (p. 19). To retain legitimacy, they demand we undergo a “serious rethinking of such terms as *validity*,

generalizability, and *reliability*” (p. 19). But as qualitative researchers, we have most assuredly been within this “serious rethinking” for several decades. Here, I will highlight some of the new constructs developed to replace the old terms. Qualitative research has not yet established clear conclusions on how to define evaluation criteria for quality (Bailey, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2014), but many have contributed to the ongoing conversation.

Qualitative research is replete with constructs to measure research quality and rigor (Tracy, 2010). In writing about evaluating quality of qualitative research, Corbin and Strauss (2008) go so far as to write that they “feel paralyzed, unsure of where to begin, or what to write... everyone agrees that evaluation is necessary but there is little consensus of what that evaluation should consist of” (p. 297). Tracy (2010) writes that the “vast array of criteria can also bewilder those new to the field” (p. 837), as she herself adds eight new terms. The number of new constructs is frankly staggering. However, the excitement and attention to the development of evaluation criteria for qualitative research seems to show the overwhelming support for a break with the “vestigial verbage” constructs of *objectivity*, *generalizability*, *validity*, and *reliability*.

Back in 1967, Glaser and Strauss set in motion a divergence of qualitative research away from notions of positivistic validity and reliability. They astutely noted that their new ideas were merely “a beginning venture in the development of improved methods” (p. 1). Glaser and Strauss (1967/2009) wrote, “references to credibility enable us to controvert the frequent discrediting of the generating of grounded theory... this criticism stems from the sociologists’ taking as their guide to credibility the canons of rigorous quantitative verification on such issues as... reliability, validity...” (p. 224). They saw *credibility* more as the credibility of an upright and knowledgeable witness (in a courtroom sense), familiar with the subject matter through plenty of

exposure to it. By introducing the notion of credibility, they made clear the idea that qualitative research was in a different arena entirely from quality standards for quantitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Lather (1991) has also offered suggestions for qualitative researchers to improve research quality. She has suggested that triangulation is important for seeing different perspectives within the research. She relates construct validity to researcher reflexivity, saying that each construct must be deconstructed by the researcher, as opposed to possibly reified and reinforced through research. I have done this through the literature review step in formulating the research plan. She adds that face validity should develop among consensus building of results, with other theorists and with research participants through member checking. Also, she notes that building catalytic validity should be a focus of qualitative researchers, where participants have built enthusiasm for developing new understandings throughout the research process, which helps critical researchers focus on the emancipatory aim of research.

While many have since created new terms that add unique perspectives, Lincoln and Guba (2003) have developed the most widely applied set of criteria (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (2005) write that *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* are more appropriate measures of rigor in a qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) replaced the term *objectivity* with *confirmability*; and *reliability* with *dependability*. They propose that internal validity be converted to *credibility*, and *external validity* shall be replaced with *transferability*. To research with *credibility*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that research activities include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. To promote *transferability*, they recommend thick description, while *dependability* and *confirmability* in research may be increased through

auditing one's process. However, just as Glaser and Strauss (1966) did, Lincoln and Guba (1986) also stated that they viewed their efforts as only a beginning, and so many other researchers have since contributed to the conversation.

From the realm of evaluation, Mertens and Wilson (2012) use the terms *accuracy*, to explain how “dependable, precise, truthful, and trustworthy” (p 23), and also include *utility* (how useful to others are the findings?), *feasibility*, *propriety* (how ethical, moral, legal, etc.), and *meta-evaluation* (quality overall; pp 23-24). Davies and Dodd (2007) add to the discussion, with their own constructs of rigor for qualitative studies, including “*attentiveness, empathy, carefulness, sensitivity, respect, reflection, conscientiousness, engagement, awareness, and openness*” (p. 279). Without defining each of these terms, one might see from their names that these constructs emphasize ethics and values and embracing feminist perspectives. So, there is a breadth of new criteria being developed, and each has added a new element to the conversation.

While new terms are certainly part of the evolution of qualitative inquiry, some question the appropriateness of a universal set of criteria (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2014; Gibbs, 2014; Rolfe, 2006). Rolfe has argued that the lack of consensus on quality evaluation criteria is due to their inappropriate application to “a wide range of disparate research methods and methodologies” (p. 309). Flick (2014) adds to the conversation what he calls, *method-appropriate criteria*, rather than criteria universally applied to evaluate all qualitative methodologies. In this, I agree, and add that qualitative inquiry theorists may not need to run parallel those use in quantitative research; rather than confidently branching out, free of their vestigial verbiage, understanding the open sea of possibility before them. Suffice it to say, there is no consensus on how precisely to judge the quality of qualitative research. In essence, overarching criteria for quality in qualitative data analysis remain elusive, in part due to the

extremely broad range of qualitative approaches (Barbour, 2013; Rolfe, 2006). In light of these many different perspectives, I will aim for my research activities to more closely parallel a Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for credibility. In other words, by embracing the critical ethnographic case study, I follow Lincoln and Guba's recommendations for increased credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These measures for increased qualitative quality measures are in Appendix E, the research quality construct table.

Chapter Summary of Methodology

In summary, this research probes into issues of AAM discourse, values and belief systems, farm labor, and social reproduction, through a critical ethnographic case study methodology. With a critical constructivist approach, I address the questions: (1) *What mediating sociomaterial tools and artifacts inform on-farm apprenticeship learning within this activity system?* (2) *How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system?* (3) *How does AAM discourse and technique articulate into sociomaterial outcomes in this activity system?* (4) *What are the social, cultural, and political implications of cognitive praxis and identification processes within this on-farm apprenticeship activity system?* I conducted data collection and analysis to illuminate these issues with a continually reflexive approach, using ethnographic case study methodology to research an on-farm apprenticeship activity system surrounding a mediating, AAM-oriented organization. I collected data through participant observation, interviews, and document analysis throughout May to December of 2016, and analyzed the data through spring of 2017.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Findings Introduction

This chapter explores the major themes that emerged through my analysis of the data, primarily through the lens of CHAT (Engeström, 1999), and with cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1999) and identity theory (Hall, 1996) as supplemental theoretical frames. While there were many themes to emerge from the data, this chapter highlights my interpretation as it pertains to the research questions and theoretical constructs framing the study. With these as a guide, I found ways in which privilege was creating spaces of privilege and work narratives, in manual labor identity play, and how oppositional identities were working to negotiate productivist and neoliberal values within the activity system. I also saw how multiple objects were leading to conflict within the system. The way that participants were negotiating materials based on identity work, rules, and social norms were leading to reproductive elements that produce and maintain farms with less labor productivity.

I interpreted data and constructed meanings through analysis of field notes (53 days), interview (n=25) data, and documents (n=407), and then dimensionalized primarily through constructs of CHAT in a semi-open coding process. I employed cognitive praxis constructs to understand alternative agrifood movement discourse elements, while constructs of cultural identity theory were used to describe the subjects or actors present within the activity system. Also, I used emergent themes of neoliberalism, and productivist values, as code families in the analysis. I present quotes verbatim, with only very minor edits, mainly to punctuation, in order to improve readability.

Field notes reported below describe my participant observation as I worked alongside apprentices on farms, attended farm tours, workshops, conferences, farm parties, social

gatherings of apprentices, and farmers markets. Documents analyzed included handouts from workshops, documents referred to on farms, handouts from conferences, and communications for public dissemination from the local mediating organization, including web content. Table 7 summarizes interview participation, farms with which they were affiliated, their role, and pseudonyms. Additionally, I assigned pseudonyms to farms upon which I conducted participant observation. Please note in Table 7: I only assigned pseudonyms to farms where I conducted participant observation, yet I interviewed several participants who were unaffiliated with those farms, as shown in the table.

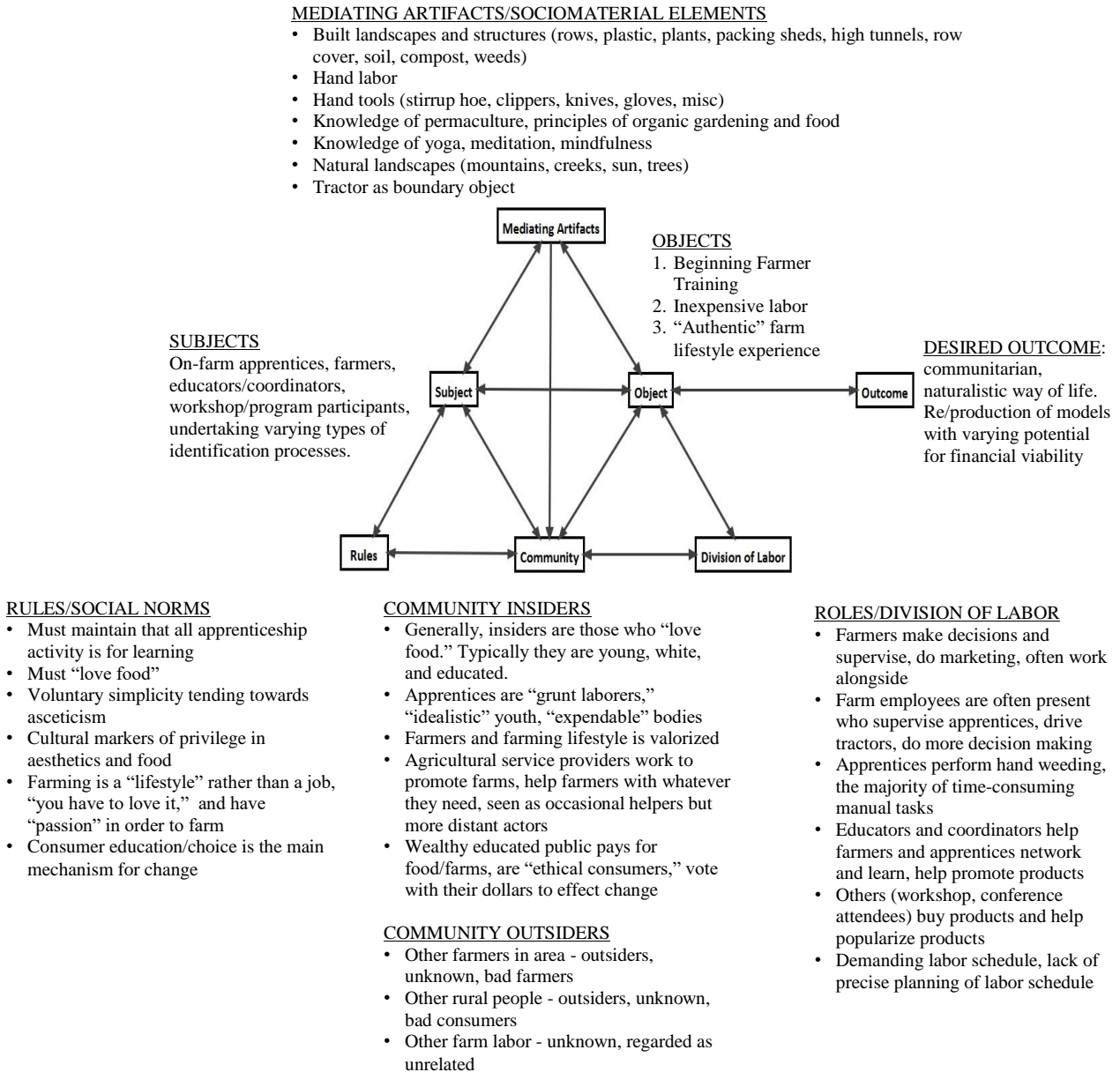
Table 7: Pseudonyms of Interviewees, their Role, and Farm Affiliations (if any)

| Farm Pseudonym | Pseudonym | Role of Interviewee |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Hecklers Hill | Hyacinth | Apprentice |
| Hecklers Hill | Heidi | Apprentice |
| Hecklers Hill | Helen | Apprentice |
| (none assigned) | Grace | Apprentice |
| Piping Peppers | Patty | Apprentice |
| (none assigned) | Faith | Apprentice |
| (none assigned) | Flynn | Apprentice |
| Velvet Valley | Valerie | Apprentice |
| Hecklers Hill, Velvet Valley | Hector | Apprentice |
| Velvet Valley | Vera | Apprentice |
| Velvet Valley | Vernon | Apprentice |
| Piping Peppers | Patricia | Apprentice |
| Velvet Valley | Vance | Apprentice |
| Rough Cut Ridge, Merry Mark | Rick | Apprentice |
| Crackle Creek | Christoph | Farmer |
| (none assigned) | Frank | Farmer |
| (none assigned) | Fiona | Farmer |
| Piping Peppers | Paula | Farmer |
| Rough Cut Ridge | Ross | Farmer |
| (none assigned) | Jack | Farmer |
| (none assigned) | June | Farmer |
| Velvet Valley | Vincent | Farmer |
| Merry Mark | Melvin | Farmer |
| (none assigned) | Bridget | Farmer, Educator |
| Hecklers Hill | Hank | Farmer, Educator |

Activity System Dimensions

Since the underlying foundation of my theoretical framework was CHAT, I created a CHAT schematic to conceptualize the interaction of different elements within the activity system. Please see Figure 3. Within the subject dimension, I found evidence of application of cultural identity theory. Specifically, an oppositional identity and expressions of privilege are being used by participants to navigate neoliberalism and communitarian values. The cognitive praxis of system actors (farmers, on-farm apprentices, and others present) can be seen throughout each dimension of the activity system, most notably within the rules, community, division of labor, and outcome. The cognitive praxis of system actors centered around expressions of AAM discourse and symbolic boundaries to the activity system.

Figure 3: CHAT dimensions of findings



CHAT-Subject/Actor Identity

CHAT analysis focuses attention on describing the subject within an activity system. In other words, the subject is the ‘who,’ the actor who is undertaking the activity towards the desired goal, or object(s). I observed that system actors came from a place of privilege. Actors were using their privilege to claim space and re/produce whiteness. Also, they were approaching

their farm work with ideals of symbolic and romanticized versions of agrarianism. This activity was mediated through AAM discourse, which contributed values of asceticism and dirty work attitudes that showed levels of privilege. The AAM discourse also mediated the negotiation of noncapitalist and productivist ideals. In this way, data provided insight into the constructed, perceived, and hidden elements of the identities of the subjects/actors within the activity system.

Levels of Privilege within the Activity System

Participants within this study had varying forms and levels of privilege, but were mainly from white, middle- to upper-class, backgrounds, with high levels of formal educational attainment, with very few exceptions. Most were also not from a farming background. Many expressed that the bulk of on-farm apprentices were wealthy, saying, for example:

Yeah [apprentices] they're usually pretty wealthy too. I mean, not just wealthy but financially secure. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

And the below farmer notes similarly. He says:

I feel, you need like either family land or some affluency to do this. I mean, not, there's exceptions, of course, but you know, in order to do the apprenticeship, some financial support – it's not something that you can afford to do if you've got a lot of debt, you know. (Farmer, Vincent)

Apprentices were often reflective about their own levels of privilege, as in the below:

We both grew up pretty comfortably, like always having a house over our head and having parents and siblings and stuff like that, so it's like, we know that those things are important... I was used to being really comfortable like, things weren't a problem paying for things. And now [during the apprenticeship] I'm like ooh I have to think about buying stuff! You know? (Second Year Apprentice, Faith)

Many of the participants were aware that the apprenticeship experience was only available to those who could afford to accept low or no pay for a delimited duration. The below apprentice points out that the apprenticeship experience costs money in order to pay for associated costs:

[Apprenticeship does not pay] It's not much money, it's not any money, I could say, but I'm not really trying to – we don't have to – we're eating amazingly and

we don't have to pay rent. If you can come up with enough money to pay for your car and cell phone. Gas money and some beer, of course. (Vera, Apprentice)

The below apprentice, who was one of very few who was from a less privileged background, pointed out how access to the apprenticeship experience was only open to the privileged. She says:

Most people I know can't lead this lifestyle, and it's not necessarily by choice, it's just by circumstance. Living in the wrong neighborhoods, living on the wrong side of the city, it's not even having time to cook because you have to work two jobs. (Valerie, Apprentice)

It was less common for participants to express thoughts on the predominantly white backgrounds of the participants. There were a small number of apprentices who were racial and ethnic minorities that I saw throughout data collection (in all, fewer than five). I did not spend much time quantifying racial minorities present since that was outside the scope of my methodology, but the below field note is from one day when I noticed the most racial/ethnic minorities present at one of the workshops:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Of all present (42 adults) most were white except one African American with southern, rural accent, and one Latino man from Colombia (no farm background, he said his grandfather had goats), both college educated.

Although the below farmer notes the white racial backgrounds of the apprentices, along with middle class backgrounds, and he associates the background with idealism. He says:

So you know, like what is the demographic of your average apprentice? What is that? I mean, middle class, white, you know, yeah definitely. A lot of idealism, and that idealism is there. (Vincent, Farmer)

Also, many participants pointed out that most apprentices are college educated. As the below farmer succinctly states:

The typical crew is recent college graduates. (Hank, Farmer)

Some participants were aware of the community capitals that come with having a college education. The below farmer talks about what makes a successful beginning farmer in his perspective and mentions a college education and the associated social capital. He says:

Yeah you don't have to have like, a diploma, but you have to have all the things that go along with why you're a college educated person. You probably definitely do help - to have an educated background in an educated community, probably helps. Just, I mean, to get you into it to begin with! You know, to be an apprentice. You know like, yeah I don't know it's interesting quandary. I mean the whole thing is that you don't need a diploma, but you need all those things that typically surround somebody who goes to college, which is, I don't know exactly what those are. (Vincent, Farmer)

In the above, the farmer expresses an understanding that the social capital associated with being a college education person gives participants an advantage to accessing this activity system. He also appears to treat it as a cultural norm within his understanding of beginning farmers. Thus, as the above data suggests, various layers of privilege (middle- to upper-class, white, and college educated) characterize participants within this study.

Agrarian Identities: Symbolic forms of Agrarianism

It is clear that agrarian identities have been negotiated by many in the activity system, in order for the individuals to do the work. One theme that emerged from the data, however, is that there appears to be an uneasy tension between a more romanticized, or symbolic form of agrarianism, and actors' agrarian identities. They are undertaking identity play with elements of this symbolic form, negotiating how to suture these elements into their own identities.

The below farmer, in discussing workshops for small farmers in the area, does not relate to the "idealism" and the "romantic notions" he perceives. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer said]: "I'm all about beginning farmers, where they lose me is the idealism." He said "romantic notions."

Agrarian toughness was here expressed by farmers. The below farmer says:

I feel like people are like cushy now. Like they don't want to go outside and work and sweat. They want a tech job or whatever. (Christoph, Farmer)

Some of strains of agrarianism were expressed by farmers as well, and had clearly become a part of their agrarian identity. The below farmer expresses a value of rugged individualism in his focus on the “interaction between you and your farm.” As in:

Biodynamics was a choice because I feel like it's more, has more of an ethos of conservation minded practice than straight up organic agriculture. You know, it's more about interaction between you and your farm, rather than input oriented. That's just more attractive to me. (Christoph, Farmer)

While the below farmer also embraces his identity as an agrarian by his expression of spiritual uprightness and ascendance behind his farming ethos. He says:

But it's how you do it and how you think about like do you do it methodical? Do you do it spiritually? Or do you do it lazy and begrudgingly? So I don't talk a lot normally, and I don't – people probably think a lot differently, normally, of like, who I am, but like, we've pulled, I don't know, 30, 40, 200 foot of weeds today, ad sure some of that time I was just pulling weeds, but a lot of that time I'm like giving thanks. I'm like intentioned, I'm – I mean we were talking a lot of the time but still on the other side of my brain, I'm like, enjoying this and giving thanks for this opportunity. I mean, I tell the pigweed that I love it! I love you pigweed! Because I don't want to hate anything. You know? (Ross, Farmer)

Some participants were more clearly attached to symbolic, romanticized forms of agrarianism.

For example, the below farmer holds an ideal of one day being the “fairy farm mother” who will “parade the land on [her] horse,” which shows values of rugged individualism and romanticism.

She explains:

Somebody else will do that, I've got to find somebody else to do it. I just want to show up and be the fairy farm mother. That's my long term goal, where I will parade the land on my horse, and have people that are helping me do stuff. Right now I've been doing everything forever, you know. (Patty, Farmer)

And the below apprentice is clear about her emphasis on idealism of cultural traditions. She holds an ideal of women being “in the kitchen,” and images of an idyllic past in North America,

since she thinks we'd be "happier" if we hadn't "lost" these elements. The visual depiction is striking in the symbols she values. She says:

And cooking is culture! If you think of – I don't think America has a culture! I don't! And you look at all these – like you've been to South America – like the family's in the kitchen. You're around mom and grandma and aunts and everybody and you're all just making meals together. Yeah we've completely lost that. I think we'd all be happier. (Vera, Apprentice)

Also, one of the social gatherings had a competition involving farming-related challenges, designed by one of the farmers in the study. The challenges were a combination of more symbolic versions of agrarianism and farming skills in everyday use. One challenge, for example, was taking on and off overalls, while another challenge was the use of a post driver.

The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] "Farmer Olympics" that was both stereotypical (overalls) and real (post-driving)

The below farmer places value on rugged individualism and bravery as evidenced by not going to the doctor. He says:

I use herbs a lot in my daily life. Part of that again is just being able to take care of myself, and not have to go to the doctor... all sorts of things wrong with that picture. (Ross, Farmer)

Many displayed typical agrarian values on bravery and toughness, even when it did not seem appropriate to do so. Often there were clearly risks to the health and safety of the humans present, and it would have been relatively easy to ensure less risk. In the below instances, poisonous spiders and snakes were not removed from the areas where people lived and worked. While this relates to value placed on naturalism, it is also a display of toughness in order to cope. I saw, for example, four instances where black widow spiders were found in the field and rescued, and returned back to their place, even when we knew we would be returning to the same spot in the near future. Farmers were often present in these instances. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Rough Cut Ridge Employee] found a black widow [while we were working in the rows] and shuffled it back under the plastic, with all [including farmer] watching.

And another black widow was found on Velvet Valley farm. My field note is as follows:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] finds black widow, we talk about the poison effects of black widows. No one kills the black widow, [Other apprentice] makes point about its fitting into the ecosystem.

And at one farm, a large black snake was constantly seen in the rafters of the barn where the products were packed and several apprentices were housed upstairs. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Large black snake in kitchen – named by [apprentice] (“Howard?”), the snake is left to crawl in the general direction of the packing shed, over the cooler area, in the rafters. The snake also visits the apprentice rooms but (openly) it is celebrated, not feared.

A naturalistic toughness was also observed related to the elements. During one farm workshop, a soft rain fell on our group. I was one of the only ones who wore a raincoat and was protected from the rain. My field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] RAIN!!! It rained for almost the entire duration of the trip, and very few people seemed to notice or care. When asked if the group wanted to continue on or head back (after touring for over an hour in the rain), a show of hands only indicated that 4-5 out of the approx. 30 wanted to keep going. But we continued anyway, and there were very few complaints.

One of the farmers gently jibed me for wearing sunblock lotion, which showed a tinge of disapproval. She did not wear it. Below is the field note entry:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] said “I can smell your sunblock from here!”

People were often barefoot on farms, as well. The below were barefoot for a farm tour, even as it was raining. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] A family arrived halfway through with no rain protection and the children were all barefoot (4 of them, a bit older, aged ~9-15)

So farmers, apprentices, and others uphold more symbolic forms of agrarianism, as well as apprentices, but are clearly using these symbols to drive their identity and realize farming as practice.

AAM Discourse Mediation: Being “part of a movement”

Actors in the activity system almost universally talked about themselves in terms of being “part of a movement,” considered part of a larger effort to oppose the dominant food system. Their identity work is part of the oppositional mindset as membership in AAMs. The below apprentice reflects on his identifying as part of the movement:

I wanted to at least be part of the movement, because movements are really easy to see online, easy to see how many things are popping up and how many people are getting excited about it ... I want to be involved in that, because it’s important. (Hector, Apprentice)

Apprentices expressed that they wanted to be in an area where there was “organic” farming, to see themselves as part of a larger community. The below apprentice says:

There’s a lot of organic farms around here, and I definitely wanted to be around organic farming. So I really wanted to come back into it and learn everything I can and get back in that groove. (Grace, Apprentice)

The promotional materials for the local mediating organization clearly states that they are a part of a movement and an opposition to “industrialized” agrifood. It says:

[DOCUMENT] Help end our over-reliance on industrialized food systems... while the industrial revolution promised to “liberate” us from rural life and physical toil, it has created more problems than it has solved. (promotional mailing)

And the below apprentice also wanted to be around an area with “this type” of farming (she was on a farm that was small scale, diversified, direct marketing), which she places apart from “monocrop ag,” where those who worked on farms were connected to each other. She says:

That area, weren’t as big as farming areas, were just this type of farming, were all like cornfields, like monocrop ag is just like, that’s all there is around you, so

there's not that same type of environment for lots of education and farm workshops and stuff like that. So I'm just excited to be in an area where that's a thing and that's emphasized and I have access to that kind of stuff. (Apprentice)

The below handout from one of the conferences of the local mediating organization provides a slice of the types of things that the above apprentice may have been referring to when she says she was looking for “lots of education and farm workshops and stuff like that.” It says:

[DOCUMENT] Community food. Cooking. Earth skills. Farming. Gardening. Herbs. Livestock. Mushrooms. Permaculture. Pollinators. Poultry. Soils. Sustainable Forestry. Sustainable living. And more!

This list would look much different if the activity system were not informed by AAM discourse.

The below apprentice describes his practice as being part of an oppositional movement:

When I was going into college and I was really into environmental stuff, and wanted to get involved on campus, and went to a student group meeting in the first couple weeks of school, freshman year. And I began to realize soon after joining and getting involved that, sort of, food was one of the very important parts of climate change and climate change mitigation, adaptation, but it's often overlooked by policy and government, but it's also at the same time one of the ways that consumers on a day to day basis can have a huge impact mitigating climate change, based on our decisions. A lot of what we do is structural systematic, but with food it's different and so I got more involved with the student group and getting more local organic fare, human food on campus. (Apprentice, Vernon)

And the below apprentice describes going against dominant agricultural norms. She says:

I feel like, is our food industry too far gone? With all the factory and a lot of our food in grocery stores comes from, not even our country. And even in our country we're just growing damn soy, and putting up cows, and it's like, it makes me sad. But at the same time I'm like well, be the change you want to see. And if I can do that, then I'll live in my happy bubble. (Vera, Apprentice)

It was also universal for participants to align with the version of the environmental ethic as it is expressed through AAM discourse, with the understanding that this opposes dominant agricultural norms. The below apprentice sarcastically says:

Science can up your yield, all you have to do is spray this poison! (Rick, Apprentice)

As another example, the below apprentice says:

[Sarcastic tone] Those people who care about not hurting the earth! (Faith, Apprentice)

Another strain in the AAM discourse that was frequently heard in this activity system was that individual choice is the mechanism for social change (rather than policy shift, organizing, etc.).

The below apprentice, for example, expresses:

Rather than going out and preaching all these things to people that they don't want to hear, lead by example, and support yourself, and do everything good that you can do yourself, and maybe everyone who sees you doing that might care more when you're not preaching to them and you're just living your life the way that you think they should live theirs, and they see you making it work. (Flynn, Apprentice)

The below farmer seems to consider himself a part of the “organic farming movement” and offers a critique. He says that curriculum is “very beginner” and that trainings that do not adequately prepare beginning farmers. He says:

Just in general the whole talked about organic farming movement seems to inspire a lot of people but doesn't properly train them. [worker] and I went to the [name] course... teach people about farming see if they want to farm, develop a farm plan, and I thought I might be able to learn something there, and it still, I don't feel like it readied people. On the very basic beginner level it did. Like the first class was, rain comes from a cloud, it falls on the ground, it goes into a stream, it goes into the ocean and the sun comes out it goes back in the sky, yeah. Whoa! This is very beginner! This is like inner city, I want to farm! (Ross, Farmer)

The farmer makes an important point, that the “movement” discourse does not necessarily translate into knowledge of food and farming. He says that knowledge of the water cycle, which is privileged knowledge within an environmentalist discourse, is not necessarily related to knowledge of farming. So, although AAM discourse is a universal element within this network, it cannot be said to mean an AAM practitioner has farming knowledge.

So, if AAM can be said to be a social movement, the participants in this study are very clearly aligned with it, and it is a significant part of their identity processes. Actors here are conversant in “organic” and “sustainable” discourses, and see individual choice as a major mechanism for social change. In one way or another, virtually all the actors I observed and spoke to within the system identified as oppositional to dominant agrifood norms.

Noncapitalistic Ideals

It was common within the activity system to hear expressions that display of values of communitarianism and identified and valued noncapitalistic spaces (even if they would not use those exact terms). For example, there was a strong theme to eschew the monetary economy. The below farmer would rather not have to sell his products for money. He grapples with the issue thusly:

Yeah I sort of have a problem with selling food and same thing with selling medicine, it's not ideal for me, but that's sort of another paradigm that I'm just dealing with now. You know I need to make money cuz I need a tractor to grow these herbs, so everybody that wants herbs is going to have to pay a share of my tractor. (Ross, Farmer)

The below apprentice describes how the farmers they work with do not value “a little bit more money” enough to spend time away from family, in contrast to achieving maximum profit and yields. The farmers clearly had decided to limit their productive capacity so they could spend time with friends and family. They say:

They [the farmers] made it very clear that they didn't work on the weekends and they respected their family time, and they farmed as much as they could and they made it work as best they can, but at the end of the day they weren't going to sacrifice their time with their kids and their family to have a farm that worked a little bit better and made them a little bit more money. They really seemed like they were genuine and valued their family time and time away from the farms just as much as they wanted to make the farm work. (Flynn, 3rd Year Apprentice)

The below farmer explains his processing through his rationale for continuing to accept money in exchange for his goods, although the practice goes against his noncapitalistic values. He says:

Well on the basic face of it, money can simplify things. You know, just give me ten bucks for that pound, and that's your share. People are really funny and complicated and it would take a whole PR department to come up with a way to make an [farm product] share. You're talking about – there are those, but this is a little bit bigger scale, I'm pretty far in debt, and my plan is to earn a substantial amount of money to pay for my debt and hard work. And I don't think an [farm product] CSA would really fly. Some forms might be out there that would work. I'm not ruling it out, I do like people, and it would be nice to have a more personal connection with my customers. Sure, have them come out at 8:30 or 9 and do some weeding! (Ross, Farmer)

Consumerism was often discussed with disdain. For example, I observed general conversations among the farmers and apprentices that were strongly anti-corporate. My field note entry is as follows:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Political conversation over picking. Everyone Bernie [Sanders] supporters. Talk about anti-corporate values. "The corporations." Critiqued triple-bottom-line of sustainability.

And the below field note records a general conversation about how taxes are structured, which was clearly derisive to the capitalistic narrative, when participants challenged the concept of "trickle down" economics. The field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] (Apprentice) says her taxes have gone way up. Conversation shifts to how tax breaks for the wealthy do not benefit society. Consensus that it doesn't "trickle down."

Also, the below participant challenges the notion of capitalistic competition. She says:

[Farmers should] share the knowledge that they have and recognize the knowledge that they have and how valuable that is, um, and sort of shifting form this idea of competition, more to "co-op-etition." Um, you know where there's more of a cooperative and collective effort um, in this process, and seeing more of our common goals rather than just our fear in that. (Bridget, Educator)

The below farmer explains how farmer decisions are often based on lifestyle choices and values, rather than profitability. She says:

I raise two flocks of chickens myself and I went through that same experience, so I get that. And I did want that connection to my food too. But from like a business perspective, it's different, you know. So I don't know. But I feel like that sort of stuff gets rationalized all the time in the farming world. Like on a small scale, anyway. It's viewed differently. It's viewed like, well this is something I just want to be doing, so it doesn't matter if the money's there necessarily. (June, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

The below third-year apprentice has explored some of his thoughts on how his noncapitalistic values conflict with the need to stay financially afloat as a farmer. He says:

I feel like a lot of small organic farms are getting by because they can charge a lot of money to a restaurant so they can charge even more money to a person with a lot of money to get this food, but the food was grown in a really great way and prob better than it could have been otherwise, but then it's only available to people who have money to eat at it. And I think both of us think that good food, healthy food, should be available to everyone and which I think is tricky, because small farms, they need a way that they're able to get by and if they sell their crops for so much more being raised in whatever sort of organic they are. And being specialty crops and being seasonal and everything, they can demand this higher price for what they're growing, but then in return only people with a lot of money can afford it, which doesn't make sense. So I don't know if maybe the model of the small organic sustainable farm could expand to a bigger thing, but that's not what we want to do really. I think we're interested in supporting ourselves, our family, people close to us, our community. (Flynn, 3rd Year Apprentice)

And the below apprentice does not think money should be a driving factor. He says:

There's not as much money in it [sustainable farming], which is the problem, obviously. So I guess you need to get, like most things, money can't be the driving factors behind it. Uh, feeding people, and preserving land needs to be the driving factor behind it. So people think that way but businesses don't, so [we need] many many small farms. Lots of small farms. (Hector, Apprentice)

So in the activity system, noncapitalistic values were a consistent theme.

Encountering and Negotiating Productivist Ideas

Despite noncapitalist values, participants— apprentices, farmers, and others – seemed to be continually encountering and negotiating agricultural productivist ideals within farming activity. They are attempting to reconcile these principles within their identities as (often symbolic versions of) agrarians. The below farmer, who has farmed for several decades, explains how he has spoken to many who have “bucolic dreams.” He says:

Usually my pitch is, don't quit your day job. Just run the numbers. If say a typical household income is \$50,000. Do you know how many heads of lettuce that is? And how many times you have to bend over to make the \$2,000? And that's gross. If you want to net! It's a lot and it requires a certain amount of volume, that I think when people start with the fairly bucolic dreams of, it will be a large garden and I'm going to make my living on that. (Hank, Farmer)

The below farmer also points out that people often are ill-prepared for the business aspects of running a farm at the outset. He says:

It's a lot of hard work! And you're running a small biz and a lot of people aren't prepared for that, and yeah, they think they can just get a piece of land and start farming and it's gonna be great! (Christoph, Farmer)

One former apprentice, now farmer, explains how he has processed his “romantic feelings.” He says:

I get down about these things... I don't know where I fit into it all but I still, I want to grow food to make my living. And I do have very romantic feelings about the food system, but I'm also a very practical person and realize that I can work towards a better food system for everybody, but in the meantime I'm going to sell things to restaurants that are feeding tourists and to wholesale outlets that are selling it to restaurants that are feeding tourists. (Melvin, Farmer)

The farmer above is motivated to farm in part because he holds an agrarian ideal of rural communitarianism, and is having difficulty reconciling the ideal while he must encounter the

economic realities of farming. He does not want to sell to tourists, which suggests that he is uncomfortable with the socioeconomic placement of his farm.

Some farmers expressed more comfortability with productivism than others. At one of the farms that hosted a workshop, the farmer no longer placed emphasis on the communitarian value, which was represented often as the “know your farmer” idea. Instead, he wanted to produce “as many veggies as he can.” He was clearly thinking through finances carefully, as well. This mindset was questioned with interest by other farmers, who themselves must negotiate this ethical dilemma. My field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Frank asks: do you miss the relationship with the customers? [Male Farmer] replied he did at first, but now he doesn't as much. He said he was always the farmer just piling produce on the dirty table at market because he doesn't care. [Female Farmer, partner] said he has horrible handwriting, so can't make pretty signs... Description of how the wholesaler takes a cut (15%) for post-harvest handling and marketing, and (Male Farmer) thinks that is well worth it. He says “hey, they don't have to spend \$20,000 on boxes every year!” ...He said sometimes on a Saturday, it will occur to him that no, I didn't go to market today, but I just harvested 70 crates of squash! [female farmer] says some people are in it for the relationship with customers, but [male farmer] is just in it for producing as many veggies as he can possibly do.

The below apprentice is disappointed that she is part of a productivist farm and therefore is unable to ask questions during a task. She says she feels like it is a “factory.” See below:

The only disappointment I have about this entire experience is that I don't think I'm learning as much as I would want to... [we are] chugging out things working 60 hours [a week], making sure we harvest enough for market, like sometimes it feels like I'm working more in a factory, and less on a small scale farm. Because there's just a lot that we have to do, we have to push through, um, sometimes I hold back my questions because I know we have to be productive at the end of the day. So talking is kind of discouraged. That's the only setback. (Valerie, Apprentice)

The below farmer, former apprentice, also described a tension with values of apprenticeship related to the farm finances, when he questioned the financial figures when a farm seemed to be making a lot of money but apprentices were not making much money (\$200 per month), yet they were working hard to prepare for the monthly farm dinner. He said:

Every apprentice on that farm would work over time for that, and we made \$200 a month. It's \$80 a ticket! And there's one per month! And then on top of that there were two festivals that brought in like – [implied: a lot of money] ... And then the farmer's always saying they don't have any money, so it's like an interesting dynamic. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

And official event promotions showed that the agricultural service community surrounding the activity system saw the need to professionalize farming. The community seemed to be moving toward a greater degree of professionalization of farming processes. For example, many promotions and documents say things such as:

[DOCUMENT] There's more to farming than just planting and harvesting; a thriving farm needs a strong business plan. (event promotion)

As another, example, the below workshop features the topic:

[DOCUMENT] Think Like a Consumer: Marketing Tips to Better Sell by the Piece or in Bulk. (event promotion)

And the below promotional material disseminated at one of the conferences, came from a small business that also hosted a workshop entitled “Growing Herbs for Market,” which was a litany of how herb businesses could be profitable. The business’ motto was:

[DOCUMENT] Still made the wise woman way! (promotion)

This tension between noncapitalistic and productivist values sometimes created conflict between farmer and apprentice. The below situation, which constituted a conflict between the farmer (Paula) and apprentice (Patricia), stems from conflicting values of the farm needing to be productive and the apprentice’s idea of the value of community (symbolic agrarianism) at the

farm. The issue arose when the apprentice, who had at other times talked about the importance of “building relationships” and “community,” spent the evening with one of the agritourism guests, a customer of the farm. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Paula said Patricia was supposed to be working doing something on a Saturday (the Saturday before I came previously), but instead talked to a [agritourism] guest for two hours and then went into town/drank (Paula thinks?) with that person for all the rest of the night instead of doing what she was “supposed to do.”

Also, the below apprentice is realizing the difference between gardening and commercial agriculture:

I mean one of my revelations was just like, farming is unlike, it’s not gardening. This is not like, harder gardening. (Vera, Apprentice)

The below farmer is processing through the difference between a “small farm” and “homesteading.” He thinks that much of the discourse that occupies space in the activity system is actually more focused on homesteading, rather than production agriculture. He says:

You know I just question how like, the economic viability of a lot of it, you know, and. Like the – no what the workshops are on, and what the real story with that farm is, you know, yeah I mean like, give me the whoel picture, like are you actually making money? Or do you have a trust fund? You know. That kind of thing. What are the economics? Are you working an off farm job? You know that kind of stuff, um. Sure that’s not necessarily applicable to what they’re teaching, but then, you know a lot of the workshops are small farms and, there’s so much – I don’t know. What is a small farm and what is homesteading? Like I don’t know what that is. You run into some weird stuff there. (Vincent, Farmer)

The farmer went on further to the point that in order to have a “viable” small farm you have to “run the numbers.” He says this with the underlying point that most in the activity system do not place enough value on “running the numbers.” This shows a conflict between productivism and AAM values.

Honestly how much can you make farrowing pigs? [laughs hysterically] I'll tell you those numbers right now. Whatever, yeah. I mean those numbers are so easy to run – for the best of circumstances. I mean, is it a viable venture? Yes. Is it a viable business? No. You know, and that's, well no, I mean, like that's the kind of stuff I feel like idealistically I'm going to be a pig farmer and it's like OK, like the way we do our cows is that our cows are like, a crop of onions. Right? They fit into our overall big picture. But it's not like, you know, this, you're not going to pay your mortgage with them. That kind of idea. (Vincent, Farmer)

The below apprentice has been processing through the organization that farming takes. She says:

I'm a person who really loves the organization, detail-oriented type things, and there's definitely more of that than you'd think, I guess, in farming, or more of that than I thought there was, It's not just like, go out there and pull up some stuff out of the ground all of the time, or, you know. (Grace, Apprentice)

Another apprentice has been beginning to understand the Green Revolution and what productivist agriculture means. He says:

That's the other thing I realized the first week, is like, this – it makes sense why we had the green revolution, and why we said, fuck this, let's put a bunch of – let's make up some chemicals in the lab, change up what the plants make up is, and not have to do this. I mean it totally makes sense! (Vernon, Apprentice)

The below apprentice has been realizing the labor management aspects of farming. He says:

Like you have to be good at all this physical labor and knowledge about plants and that stuff, but then you have to also somehow learn how to manage people and that's a whole different thing. I mean I worked at [healthy café name] as like a smoothie chef for like 10 years, but I managed kids there, and just that experience of knowing how to manage people and communicate with people is really valuable in any setting, but in a high paced setting like a farm, it makes a huge difference, knowing how to manage people and time. (Flynn, Third Year Apprentice)

The below farmer explains how the model of the diversified farm is often not viewed through the lens of productivism, which he feels is lacking. He indicates that the farm needs to be looked at as an integrated “economic” system, rather than “this idealistic thing,” which he says is how beginning farmer training is being delivered. He says:

[For example] our squash is all fancy, which means we gotta be careful when we pick it, which means it can't get dirty, and you can't run it through the washer, because you'll scratch the skin, and that kind of thing...I've tried to talk about the economic of what we do, and keep that on the forefront of their mind. You can't just like say OK this is why we do this! You know? This is why we, and this is why it's so inefficient! You know, so they're thinking about it more critically and it's not just like, oh they do it like this, so it's got to work across the board! So yeah it's like this doesn't work unless you're doing this, you know? Like this model only works with these other pieces, and that's like, kind of like, my schtick, is that there's so much more to these idealistic things that people like to talk about than just, you know, this is the way to do it, I guess. (Vincent, Farmer)

The local mediating organization has been assisting farmers in professionalizing their operation, which is encouraged by farmers like the above farmer, and others in the activity system. There is an emphasis on much of the 'received knowledge' about how to be financially sustainable. As in the below workshop announcement disseminated to the activity system:

[DOCUMENT] A workshop for local vegetable producers to boost competitive advantage by improving production and profit margin.

The below farmer, a former apprentice, makes a similar point, when he says that many decisions are not thoroughly considered as an integrated part of the whole farm system. He explains, using an example of misuse of the tractor on a small farm:

Because you still have to go back and transplant em by hand. They're gonna need to be weeded, at least once by hand. And it's like, decisions like that, well with the tractor it's laying it out quickly but you're not thinking about the whole picture of like, how far a space did we just create for us to have to walk to and back with – like that alone, you know. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

The below farmer talks about being "business savvy" in the context that he has noticed others in the activity system not placing value on that characteristic. He explains:

I think it's nice to have dedicated consumers. I mean it's important, but I think there's a lot of responsibility on the producer as well, is like, I'm going to be biz savvy and I'm gonna be, you know, not just riding on hey, this is local, you should buy it, you know, at any price! You've gotta compete with the supermarket. You

gotta compete with Whole Foods. You gotta be relevant in the face of that. And you know, and accept that like you aren't as convenient, you're not as consistent, you know, but you can grow varieties that don't ship well, and you can have fresher, higher quality produce because you weren't shipping, So that's part of our selling point. (Vincent, Farmer)

Some farmers ponder if how they market (via wholesale or not) is in line with their values. There is an emphasis on selling to the local community. The below farmer laments that he must stay in business by selling to restaurants and tourists, rather than his neighbors. He says:

Selling to restaurants is nice, and selling to wholesale is all right, I can move lots of stuff, but I sometimes get down on it you know? Selling to restaurants are nice, but the tourists coming through Asheville are not the people that I want to be feeding you know? I would love to be able to build a farmstand out here and have people on my road do their veg shopping there but I really doubt that there'd be much chance of that happening, I don't know where I really see myself in the greater food system. I know that probably viability wise for me to continue to make this my living, I'm probably going to go a lot – continue to go a lot more towards wholesale. (Melvin, Farmer)

And a second year apprentice expressed a similar sentiment:

We would really like to sell to restaurants because we know we can make money doing that and there's a demand for it and it's such a big thing farm to table is so huge right now, why not capitalize on that market? But deep down I wouldn't do that if I had another option of supplying my food to other needy people who would benefit from it. (Faith, Second Year Apprentice)

Many actors were encountering productivist agriculture for the first time. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY from farm tour] General “wow” after farmer describes how much volume was in the dryer before, then seeing the dry herbs littering the floor of herb dryer.

The below farmer acknowledges the struggle to negotiate ethics while remaining financially sustainable. He states:

In the back of my mind it's like well, the reason we're doing this is because we want to make a difference and we want more people to have this food, but in

reality, we can't charge less for it, because we need to get by ourselves, you know? So it's a struggle I think. (Frank, Farmer)

In many ways, actors in the activity system, apprentices, farmer, and others, are encountering and negotiating productivism. They often express the tensions inherent in attempting to reconcile their own values, consistent with the communitarian elements of agrarianism and noncapitalistic strains of social movement collective identities with productivist values.

Voluntary Simplicity with an Ascetic Bent

Apprentices, farmers, and others in the network displayed evidence of ascetic values, which often seemed to overlap with an emphasis on voluntary simplicity, as one might find within AAMs (Elgin, 1981). In a worksheet from one of the workshops, a “values clarification” exercise lists simplicity as one of the values:

[DOCUMENT] Simplicity (transparent, enough, living lightly) (worksheet)

As the below third-year apprentice explains, a “sacrifice” is necessary to farm. He says:

I think a big thing that helps you get into farming is that you have to realize that you're going to have to sacrifice a lot of stuff, and you're not going to have money to spend on things that you're used to spending money on, you're not going to have the time that you're used to spend with people, you have to realize that it's a big sacrifice, and you have to love it to keep doing it. It's not something that people are doing who don't love doing it. (Flynn, Third Year Apprentice)

The below apprentice placed value on voluntary simplicity when she found a relation between being “broke” and being “happy” as she is “living off the land.” She says:

[This is] the brokest we've ever been and the happiest we've ever been. There are very few things we worry or stress about. Which when you're living off land and nature's your best friend, I just feel like that's the natural way that a human being was meant to be, you know? (Faith, 2nd Year Apprentice)

The room and board provided was often very minimal. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Room and board is a small room in the upstairs of the packing shed, and does not include bathrooms of any kind, except a 7-8 minute walk uphill from sleeping quarters.

On one farm, the only place to have lunch was very dirty.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Lunch. Sat in old tobacco barn, surrounded by chicken leavings (feathers etc) and dirt. Even the few surfaces to set food were covered in dirt. The barn is obviously loved and used.

One farmer, former apprentice, recalls his living situation as an apprentice:

So yeah I interned on two farms, and one, I was in the barn, and it was a little apartment. It was just fine. The bathtub was the creek outside. And then the other was a teepee. For a short time it was fine. (Hank, Farmer, former apprentice)

And the below apprentice dwells in a “camper,” aware of the class-based social stigma

associated with it. The field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] calling his dwelling a “camper” instead of “trailer.” [Apprentice] makes half-serious jokes that the camper is a classier label for it, and his friend told him to call it a camper.

Another apprentice’s living conditions lack privacy and phone service.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Apprentice lives in trailer, and all must go through the trailer to get to the only bathroom, so he does not have any privacy. No internet or long distance phone, no cell service. To use internet, must go to library in an hour and a half segments (library rules) and gets capped at 3 hours a day.

Apprentices were also asked to do long hours of hand weeding with no tools, often not even gloves. This is described further in the below section “Hand Labor.” This was another expression of the ascetic bent of actors:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] 8 hours of hand weeding, stooping, hot sun, in the holes in the plastic. 80-90% of the weeds are spiny pigweed.

One of the farms also does not have a “proper toilet” (it was a pit toilet dug into the dirt floor of a condemned barn on the property, surrounded by trash and graffiti left from when the farm land was abandoned). The farmer had not expected to house apprentices that year. He says:

I wish this had a proper toilet. But they should have running water, they should be able to take a shower. They should have electricity, like we ask so much of them during the week, and then give them a shitty place to live it’s like, that sucks, you

know? And also you have to stop and think about it, you're paying them, whatever stipend you're paying them, and the reason you're paying them that small amount is because you're giving them a place to live, but if you're giving them a place to live that only a crazy person would rent, and they'd only rent it for like \$25 a month, like that doesn't compute, that's not fair compensation, to give them some awful place to live in and still only pay em like \$400 a month. (Melvin, Farmer)

The below farmer makes a similar point. His farm's apprentice housing consists of rooms in the loft of a working barn, which has electricity but no plumbing, says of the living conditions on his farm:

I mean I think a lot of this is great, but I can also see the other side of the equation. I mean I'd like to have, like, a bathroom that's not 100 yards away. Like I'd like to have a couch and a big screen TV, that I can watch all night long and not feel like I'm in somebody else's space. So big picture. That's what I would like to have. (Vincent, Farmer)

Spirituality of asceticism

Many within the activity system talked about their work in spiritual terms. They would often say that they were "connected" and were motivated by "feeling whole." As in:

For me, psychologically, this is grounding, I need this work to function properly, A lot of people cannot function with this kind of work, because all they have is their mind going crazy. And their wants, and their needs. And they're out there, they're not connected with what they're doing. And people that connect with the land and are connected with what they're doing, it's different. It feeds your soul, it motivates you, it helps you work. You need that work to feel whole. You're connected with what you're doing. So maybe that's just me, but everyone I know who's a farmer, they know their plants, they know the ground, the animals, they're connected. So if you have a disconnect with that, it's never going to work. (Patty, Farmer)

Another apprentice talks about the spiritual element of being "in the moment" as something he wants to be able to master. He says:

I can't really stop thinking about other things in life that I have to do, and I get a little frustrated about not being able to be in the moment. And I think that's a matter of me just deconditioning myself from living in the city. (Vance, Apprentice)

Biodynamics, and the spiritual elements thereof, were a significant part of the activity system, as well. The below farmer describes the mythical elements:

Biodynamics, because it kind of combines myth with mythical, you know they call it spiritual agriculture because it deals with a lot of things that are not visible, you know, and just trusting that the earth works in tandem with planets, and so it's really just harnessing, to the best of your abilities, the interaction between you, the earth, and whatever's outside the earth, you know, what's in space. And just understanding that more, so it's pretty – I just like that. Yeah. (Vera, Apprentice)

And the below document disseminated to farmer and apprentices talks about the spiritual aspects of biodynamic farming. It says:

[DOCUMENT] A holistic approach to farming. A biodynamic approach involves creating a diverse and balanced farm ecosystem through on-farm fertility cycling, working with natural and cosmic rhythms. (workshop announcement)

The below apprentice also talks about the spiritual elements:

We also like talked a lot about spiritual aspect of farming and like the connection to the earth and like going back to nature and all of that stuff and how grounding it feels, and how meaningful it feels to be growing something like to nourish people while you're also nourishing yourself mentally and physically by doing this work. Stuff like that. (Grace. Apprentice)

And she goes on to talk about her spiritual background:

I started to like learn a lot about the values of Quakerism, like simplicity and community, and stuff like that. And then I also got really interested in Buddhism. Like I definitely wouldn't call myself a Buddhist or anything like that, but I definitely, like a lot of things in that resonate with me and inform how I see the world. And a big part of that is like, it's not, you know, everything is connected, and it's not just, you know, being good to yourself and other people, but really in a deep way being good to the whole earth, and stuff like that, so I feel like that definitely connects, and I think a lot of my spiritual experiences and practices or kind of like the ways I view it have a lot to do with nature. Like in nature and with plants and stuff like that is when I feel most connected and aware of like the oneness or grounded and kind of like seeing all this. So I like see farming as spiritual in that way, because you're really immersed in that, and creating life with plants. (Grace. Apprentice)

As the below actor explains, many come to farming because they are seeking “meaning and connection.” She says:

*There’s people who are interested in farming for a reason, because there’s that meaning and connection that people are missing in their everyday life, and that we’ve lost a lot in the world, with connection to the earth and to each other, and food really is a connector in that way, growing it and sharing it and um, enjoying a meal with other people so, I think people are recognizing that.
(Bridget, Educator)*

And at one of the farm tours, a farm that grew herbs for medicinal use, a farmer acknowledged the spiritual elements of uprooting an Echinacea flower. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Everyone is enthusiastic about the Echinacea flower heads. There was a general gasp as the farmer suddenly pulled one up from its roots to show it off, and he said after a pause “I did ask permission, and it consented” (joking or serious, I couldn’t tell).

The below apprentice shows an ascetic value when she talks about how she shaved her head:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Hair – apprentice who had recently shaved her head to be buzz cut said of her short hair: “glad I went through that challenge to my vanity and self, body image.”

And, in a worksheet from one of the workshops, a “values clarification” exercise lists “inner healing/peace,” and “wonder” and as one of the values. They define these as:

[DOCUMENT] Inner healing/peace (calm sense of wholeness, content)...wonder (awe, appreciation of spirituality, mystery).

These examples contribute a spiritual or supernatural element to the activity.

When asceticism and rugged individualism are enforced

A value of voluntary simplicity and asceticism is expected of apprentices within this activity system. The below farmer, former apprentice, explains how apprentices are given the toughest jobs and low/no pay, because this value is assumed. He says:

Yeah like, if your landscape fabric has been left, over the winter, nothing but the field underneath it, it’s still, it’s not rolled up, it’s not unstapled, there’s weeds growing through it, you know? There goes that investment! And it’s like, our job

is to go roll it up just so you can plant peppers in something else, you know? And that's just crazy!... Cuz it's going to take 5 hours to do it, and efficiency wise, it costs you five dollars to do it. Go find someone else that wants to do that job for five dollars, cuz that's like a hundred dollar job, if you were going to actually pay someone a fair wage! That's a really tough job to do in whatever weather elements you have, too, you know, rainy, sunny. I just feel like that's what I mean when I say, trade off needs to be fair for the education, you know – so I'm learning how to roll up landscape fabric that's been left out too long? You know, or – I don't know. What am I benefitting from a lot of the jobs like that? ...Yeah, we want a bullshit card for apprentices! (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

Also, another apprentice is not being paid what he was promised, and not eating proper food.

Ross wants to pay me my back pay, retroactively, half of what I was supposed to get paid. He thinks I should pay for the weedwhacker that broke, I think. I can only afford to eat PB&J or eggs, as it is. He actually offered to help me sign up for food stamps, as a consolation or whatever, for not paying me what he owes me. (Rick, Apprentice)

At another time, this apprentice discusses wanting to fill out tax forms, but the farmer did not. He says:

I also wanted to be paid above the table so all my tax forms would work out, but Ross wouldn't do it. I wanted to be legal! (Rick, Apprentice)

In the below, the apprentice describes not having enough food to eat, after being told food was provided by the farm. She says this is due to the value on local agriculture. She says:

It was like, oh we provide all the food, you don't have to spend any of your own money on food, but then, especially when it was early in the season, there's like no produce, and it's like the cupboard is just like oatmeal and dried beans, and we didn't have any control over purchasing food, it was like, the farmers would purchase food for us, but then, they were really particular, They were like, no we won't buy you cereal, make some granola yourself, or something. Oh we try not to buy anything from the grocery store, you know, we're not going to buy bread, but they're like oh there's this vendor at the famers market that makes bread, so we'll buy it then, from then, but you have to wait until Saturday, you know, stuff like that. Which was cool that they were so committed to like eating locally, but it was really hard for us, we were like, all right, but what are we supposed to eat? Like you know, we can't just eat dried beans and kale, because that's all that there is here right now. (Grace, Apprentice)

Toughness was expected on the farms, and many of the farmers asked very long hours of the apprentices. As an example:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Got started picking, at [Farmer's] request, at 6pm, after a full day that had started at 7am. We had not eaten since lunch. Picked until 7pm. Others were visibly tired (frowny faces) but no complaints were vocalized.

Another apprentice recounts being asked to work at night because of the biodynamic calendar, which takes into account celestial movements. The apprentice says he got heat stroke due to exhaustion. He says:

He was planting by the biodynamic calendar, and [Ross, Farmer] asked me to start seeding the trays at 9pm. And I started at 9pm. I tried to find a way to plant it all but finally had to go to bed at 3am. So then I got up at 9am and got heat stroke the next day. I vomited, and I went to sleep, then got up the next day. (Rick, Apprentice)

Work must be hard in order to "learn"

The below farmer, former apprentice, talks about how the farmer works the apprentices very hard in order to learn. He says:

[Nearby farmer] expects a lot, a LOT, of his apprentices. He worked us hard. And I think to everybody who was there's benefit. Cuz like that happening and you stick it out and you survive it, it makes you automatically increases your work ethic all the way around. But yeah. (Melvin, farmer, former apprentice)

However, the below farmer was critical of this approach, and explained that they keep a lighter schedule to avoid getting "burnt out." He says:

Yeah I know a lot of farmers have this thing like, "I've got to show them how hard it is!" And I feel like our farm philosophy is that we're choosing this because we love it and not because it's very profitable, and if we love it, then we need to love the whole lifestyle, and so we try to really approach it, not killing ourselves with too much work! And we try to model that for the interns, and allow them to have that too! And hopefully enjoy it more, and get more out of it, so. Yeah it works pretty well for us. I'm sure we could make more money if we all pushed harder but I'm just like, no, then I'd be more burnt out and the end of the season! (Frank, Farmer)

The below third year apprentice also critiques the work schedule and how the farmers would manage the pace of work on the farm. He says:

They [the farmers] would be on top of us making sure we would be working quickly and getting it done, and working very fast, and sometimes they'd get mad if we were talking to each other, is like how much they were like, get this done, get this done. And we'd get it done, and we'd be standing around trying to figure out what to do next. And we're like, well why did we do that so fast, if now we're going to stand around and not know what we're doing next? Just things like that. Simple planning is a big part of it. And you get so stressed out when you're like, oh what do we do next? And then you've got interns so you have to manage, and you're like, well what do we tell them to do? And it's like I can see how it can be stressful, but I think simple planning and organizing can make it a whole different thing. (Flynn, Third Year Apprentice)

Apprentices have a "suck it up" mentality

Apprentices have a "suck it up" attitude for a variety of reasons, which may relate to placing value on asceticism, and general inexperience with manual labor practices, so they may lack a basis for comparison of working conditions.

I think it's THE problem, because it's the main problem. Because it's like, let's get 200 chickens. Whatever, let's get pigs! Let's try to build a creamery for the cows, so we can milk the cows and make cheese, and then flowers and vegetables on top of that for a 200-person CSA, but like, no one put insulation where the apprentices are sleeping? You know, during December and January and February? ... it's cold. It was a barn. It was the workplace. Upstairs there were four rooms. And how do you expect someone to suck that up? And it's like, you know what? Maybe – I was 23. Maybe I didn't mind at first... Yeah and it's like, this will be a piece of cake. And then it's like, December and January it's freezing cold at night! It's 33 degrees! Is there insulation in your house? Are you kidding me? You're living with like 7 other people, it is a horrible – I get that people have worse circumstances but that's not what I'm trying to be a part of right now, like. So I just feel like maybe there should be a standard, if you're going to have apprentices, your living circumstances should be up to code! Cuz I'm sure if you have that many people living under one roof, there has to be some sort of standard of like, insulated walls and sealed windows. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

And the same farmer also critiqued the need to “suck it up,” saying better planning will make the work load more manageable. He relates that to the reason why apprentices had a negative experience and didn’t “stay very long.” He says:

Yeah just like, get to weeds a little bit earlier, so you don’t have to hand weed. Like just the way every day planning was done, like if we would do this just a little sooner then it would be way less intense than putting it off for something else. Like priorities, basically. Um, but there was always a very specific reason why nothing could change, so it was difficult because I wanted more to do with the process and felt very much like they just wanted people who would be more like, yes! Whatever you say! And that’s probably why people didn’t stay very long. it was like, go do some physical labor out there. There’s bugs, It was still really hot. And she just knew that she wasn’t going to make it. And there is a part of me that wishes I just didn’t have the ‘suck it up’ mentality, because I don’t think it really needs to be like that, you know? I refuse to believe, you know. It’s obviously hard work but it doesn’t have to be crummy, horrible work. You can enjoy it and keep your body. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

Negotiating Manual Labor Identities (Dirty Work)

Both farmers and apprentices seemed to be in the process of negotiating manual labor identities, with farmers in an advanced stage of the process. Apprentices typically come to the farm with little manual labor experience and usually not equivalent to farming (outdoors, hot, dirty). The below farmer laments how youth do not know how to get “dirty” and perform manual labor, and that there is a learning curve. He says:

The learning curve is insane, And so I feel like people when they think about work they think getting dirty and working in the earth is not respectable anymore, you know it’s like in this age of like germophobia and craziness it’s just like you know, even rural kids spend a lot of time indoors, you know, playing video games and going outside is just “no!” you know? But when they’re outside and they’re there, they have the best time! But it’s just bridging that gap and I just really think that, that’s the important thing is just, however you can, get the kids outside and get them like, touching stuff and feeling stuff and just like, learning how to move their muscles. Because if you start when you’re 20 and you’ve never done manual labor, it’s going to kill you. (Christoph, Farmer)

The below farmer describes how he seeks apprentices with restaurant experience, and describes the manual labor skills that would be possessed after this experience, such as “reading each others’ body cues.” He says:

*One of the things that we look for is we often ask is if someone has had any restaurant experience, because on the farm, we have to be able to like read each other’s body cues and work around each other, and quick at a fast pace, where we can’t always stop and talk about everything every single time, and you have to do that in a restaurant. And so we thought, well that gives us a good sense.
(Frank, Farmer)*

One farmer discusses how someone who does not want to do farm labor may not be “lazy,” which shows he thinks farm labor demands a certain type of negotiated attitude towards work.

He says:

I think there is like a lack of the desire to do physical labor in general in whatever. I guess I’m technically a millennial. Sometimes I don’t feel like it, cuz like I’m towards the top end of it, and even my little brother, he’s like 5 years younger than me, he has come out and worked but like, he doesn’t want to come outside and sweat, like, he’s in school for physical therapy, It’s like he’s not lazy, but he wants to work a job from this time to this time and be done, and like, go home and do whatever. Watch Netflix. (Melvin, Farmer)

The below farmer, in the context of describing a beginning farmer workshop he was a part of, describes how many who are trying to learn farming are “rich, wealthy” and “white” and therefore have conflicting notions of work-life balance. He characterizes the work-life balance of a farmer as always working, as “chop wood. Carry water.” He, at other times, complicated this idea, however, by tempering it with the unfortunate result of having gotten a divorce because there was then no time for his family. He says:

The way the class did it was basically I want a sense of community, and healthy, and spend time with my family and be rich and travel and it was like, at the end everybody gave a presentation and I said in mine, I feel like the holistic goals is a very whitey concept. It’s like, the rich wealthy, whatever term, white person. You don’t have to be technically white, to be this, it’s just like, this sense of entitlement. It’s like no, it didn’t feel like it was real. [worker] and I talked about it in the field today. People think that one day you’re not going to have to work

hard, that you're not going to have to do the dishes after a hard day at work, like, no! Like unless you become a rich whitey, and hire that shit out, and that's not any fun anyway – you know, rich people aren't happy. So it's like, yeah you're, just life is work, and there are dirty dishes. Chop wood. Carry water. That's before enlightenment and after enlightenment. You chop wood and carry water, It's the same thing. (Ross, Farmer)

The below field note describes how a farm task was proceeding as one apprentice is learning how to move his body, work in a team, and use tools. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Then rip up fencing. Super burly task, and [two apprentices] and I undertake a team effort to get fence ripped up and redirected near greenhouse. [Farmer] has explained, but it remains slightly unclear (he explains it as an engineer would). [Apprentice] is very into using brute force, and sometimes is less mindful of where his tools are and of not hurting others as he works. I am a bit fearful he will hit my head with the bolt cutters... [He] did not know the tin snips were for the chicken wire, and didn't know the bolt cutters were for the bigger fencing.

The below apprentice thinks some apprentices think farming is “frolicking in the heathers.” She says:

*Yeah definitely making sure that the people who are there know that it's going to be hard work and not just frolicking through the heathers, as it were. (laughs)
(Helen, Apprentice)*

The below apprentice separates herself from “trustafarians,” and hints at the fact that many who are present in the activity system are not used to certain kinds of labor or had a “bad boss.” She says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] said “if you've never had a bad boss you're a trustafarian”

And the below document was an interesting study in the received wisdom from AAMs, as mediated by the local mediating organization, while being interpreted and negotiated by farmers and apprentices. A conversation on one of the farms erupted surrounding the below photo in one of the promotional materials for an educational program:

*[DOCUMENT] [Photo of white woman sitting on the ground, appears to be plucking garlic scapes. She is wearing thick black spectacles, trucker cap, and two long side braids, who appears to be in her early-twenties, with broad, carefree smile directed at the camera. Weeds on farm create a meadow look, mountains, trees, and three other white women fading in the background.]
Caption: Looking to launch or expand your farming business?*

A look at the above document shows a few things. On some level, this image of farm work is an officially envisioned ideal within this activity system. It conveys that farm work might be performed sitting down in a laid back manner. This was discussed by Ross and another employee at Rough Cut Ridge, who said that that mentality was “the problem,” in that beginning farmers come to farming having misconceptions of the type of lifestyle they will have.

“Compared to a desk job”

Many of the apprentices and farmers compare the manual labor of farming in relation to their prior knowledge of work, which often (though not always) centered around “desk jobs.”

The below apprentice describes coming from a desk job:

My background as far as agriculture probably started in information technology, um, working in [city] based corporate world, from [town], um, remote IT work. And when I became vegetarian, with my mom, then started caring. So it was the China Study that sparked it. So I went vegetarian, and then I started caring about food. And I don't remember what turned me on to specifically organic food, because that book didn't mention it, but something did. (Victor, Second Year Apprentice)

The below apprentice describes coming from a desk job:

Compared to what I could be doing, like sitting at a desk, it's so much better. So I appreciate everything, all the different tasks. I don't think there's anything I actually abhor. I like weeding, being in the garden, watering, cuz those things are fun. I like anything with the plants. I mean sometimes it's frigging hot, and I'm like, sweaty and sunburned, but that's to be expected, um, I like cleaning the barnyard, like mucking out the chicken coops. I don't mind that really at all. Um, I think it all feels purposeful, and I think that's like the only time in life when I can't get into a task, is when I'm like, what's the point of this? Like if something has a purpose I'm like, I love this! (Apprentice, Patricia)

The below second year apprentice describes the work-related backgrounds of many “organic growers.”

I think that's kind of typical of organic growers, is, a few have been to ag school, but not very many. There are a lot of people that are, oh, physicians, and rocket scientists, and physicists and people that just got tired of that first career and decided to try something completely different. So that was typical of me. I also had a desk job until recently. (Hank, Farmer)

Another apprentice discusses how he has recently been negotiating his manual labor identity, as he has been learning about lack of privacy on the job, nuances of teamwork, and to sometimes go with the consensus of the group. He says this will help him on “future resumes.” He says:

It's not like you have your own space, or your own desk that you can go to, I mean you're essentially always working with someone in a collaborative manner. Like there are very few individual tasks. Like there are – you may all be doing the same thing, but you're still, working with others to get the job done, in a much more in-your-face manner than other jobs. So yeah you've got to have a lot more patience, and understanding, and realizing what's – and since you're talking with people more and you interact more, you're going to have more disagreements, and you're going to have more like, conflict. You got to realize what's important, and what's like, this is not a big deal I just have to get over it and move on. Cuz it's really easy to be like, no we should do this! We should do that! And it's like well, it's not a big deal. It takes like a minute or two longer, it's not worth like, you know, staking your claim in it. Which is like, easier said than done! For sure. But something I've realized more since I've been here. I think it's all part of the work ethic definition. Like that's definitely going to be a buzzword on future resumes and cover letters, is like, I can work hard and I can be a part of a team, because like yeah. (Vernon, Apprentice)

The below apprentice describes learning the feelings of not working a “desk job.” He says:

I was outside, I wasn't at a desk, so I didn't care, still don't care... I was like, this feels good. We'll keep doing this for a while. Yeah and it just kept getting better. So the romantic ideal was alive and well, and still is actually. The money side kind of brings it down a little bit, but you're happy at the end of the day that you accomplished something and you're creating good food. The money thing is the only thing that dissuades it a little bit. You think I'm probably not going to make 80 grand out of this. (Hector, Apprentice)

Repetitive Tasks, Boredom, and Mental Discipline

Many apprentices were negative about doing “repetitive tasks.” The below apprentice thinks that a small farm should not have many repetitive tasks. See the below:

*If you're just doing the same thing, for large chunks of time it doesn't feel like a small farm. It feels like it becomes more of a job and less of work. Work being something interesting, job being repetitive tasks that you're experiencing.
(Apprentice, Hector)*

Another farmer expresses her perception of a work ethic as related to timing, and “discipline,” and suggests that apprentices do not always understand that in the beginning. She says:

Yeah you have to or know what you're getting into in the first place. Coming from a farming family, you were woken up as a small kid at 4am to go milk the calf, and you did it twice a day, no matter what. And that is still the work discipline that will lead to your success, I think. (Patty, Farmer)

A farmer asks prospective apprentices if they have worked at a restaurant, and goes on to say apprentices need to be able to do “monotonous stuff for long hours.” He says:

Yeah if you've worked in food service then you've done monotonous stuff for long hours, too, you know, Whether it be waiting tables or, you know, like it's not glamorous, being a prep cook. Dishwasher, you know. (Vincent, Farmer)

Just as in the above, many of the apprentices also discussed the mental discipline to carry forward with repetitive tasks, as often would need to happen in a manual labor job. The below apprentice is negotiating feeling “bored” with repetitive tasks, and would rather work in the team in order to break up tasks throughout the day. She says:

Like if I'm weeding garlic for 4 hours straight, it's a lot harder than if I'm weeding garlic for an hour with everyone! And then harvesting tomatoes for an hour with everyone. Then do this, that variety of tasks is something that I like a lot better, and also like, not having the isolation of like, all right, it's me and one other person out there in the field doing all this for like three hours, you know, the foreseeable rest of the day, like, I felt that really kind of decreased morale of everyone, in general when it's like, all right, I have to like conquer this whole massive task on my own, and then you just kind of get really down and tired of it. But when it's like, all right, we're all going to do this together, we're all going to get it done, it's like, everyone has a lot more energy and is a lot more happier so

even though I'm working longer hours here I feel so much better, and I feel like everyone else is generally more lively, less exhausted... Cuz I just get really bored with repetitive things. And farming is repetitive. (Grace, Apprentice)

The below apprentice is negotiating hand-weeding and understands it could be viewed as “zen,” although explains:

Well some people like hand weeding. It is kind if zen, but if you're doing it for more than like, half a day, you're probably going to get tired of hand weeding. It's zen to a point, It's not zen if you have to do it every day. You're like no, this is just boring and I feel like I'm not doing anything. (Hector, 2nd Year Apprentice)

The below apprentice describes a long day of work, and negotiating the “emotional turmoil,” the dignity of work, and being “discouraged.”

So we did all the harvesting the first half of the day, like 6 hours straight, in the sun, um we took lunch, and the second half was focused on laying them. That was a painful process. And I remember cursing in my mind the entire day. And there are times I think, 'why am I here? Why am I doing this? This is so exhausting! I'm sweating! I'm hot!' But then at the end of it you look at that, and you get the kind of satisfaction as if like, you'd done a masterpiece. It felt so good. I think it was worth the emotional turmoil it caused. So that was a lot of work. That was one of the more intense days that we had, simply because it was a lot of doing one thing for a long, long, long time. And I realize a lot of farming is like a mental exercise, It's convincing yourself that you can get down this row. Just persist, stay at it, you're going to eventually lay out all of these garlic. It's not going to be as bad as you think. I have to tell myself this with each task. Like yes, we have to harvest like 5 beds of potatoes, but we can get through it, like it's going to be OK. One crate at a time. It's yeah. Because if I don't have this kind of dialogue, I retreat to just complete discouraged. I get discouraged. (Valerie, Apprentice)

The below farmer discusses how farm labor differs from service oriented jobs:

I would say most of the Hardees employees wouldn't last very long in a situation like this, just cuz they're not physically prepared for the kind of work we do. Um so and yeah I think there's a fair amount of stubbornness – what's the more positive side – persistence or just? – that is required to do this sort of work. And you need to be pretty excited about it, in other words, there needs to be some enthusiasm. And I don't think that many people are that enthusiastic about Hardees, or I wouldn't be, if I were working there! So it's very systematized and hierarchical and all the bad things about corporate culture. (Hank, Farmer)

The below apprentice describes her negotiation of the mental discipline of manual labor. She says:

I mean it definitely is not for weak minded people. It's not for lazy people. You have to like what you're doing and be self-motivated for sure, or else it's going to be miserable for you. And I've been miserable and I'm like [my name], snap out of it, there's no reason to be miserable, that's only because you're hungry, or hot, or something. (laughs) But you can't, you know, it's definitely a self motivating. (Valerie, Apprentice)

And the below farmer describes the mental discipline as the reason why an apprentice was unable to perform the work. She says:

We had the people person. She can't handle farming. Just the work, the aloneness. There's so many people that have, for me, psychologically, this is grounding, I need this work to function properly, A lot of people cannot function with this kind of work, because all they have is their mind going crazy. And their wants, and their needs. And they're out there, they're not connected with what they're doing. And people that connect with the land and are connected with what they're doing, it's different. (Patty, Farmer)

At a farm party, I met former apprentices who had been unable to negotiate manual labor identities, citing the repetitive nature of the work as a reason. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Conversation with former apprentices on [farm]. They said the farming life was not for them. Too much work, too slow, too repetitive.

The below farmer, former apprentice, describes how the below apprentice approached manual labor differently from the others and seemed to have a different version of manual labor identity:

We worked with this kid, and he was from France, and we became really good friends, and it was funny seeing his work ethic, I guess, compared to everyone else's. Everyone else was scattered around, all from Wisconsin, Chicago, DC, other parts of FL, it was really like a wide spread group of people. And honestly, he really opened – there was one thing I really took away from that experience, how like, he worked hard, but he made damn sure he was enjoying the day! Like I don't smoke, but he'd have a cigarette, maybe not the best way to start your day, but maybe have a little wine around 10am, and he wasn't going to bust his butt like it was a huge hurry to harvest. He was like, it's going to get done! Like we have a huge number to harvest, you know? Like what do you want us to do? Break our back every day? No way! I'm going to enjoy it. And I'm not going to say he didn't work hard, he always got the job done, and he may have complained

about it, because it was more work that he was used to, but it was like a 220-person CSA like, plus 2 mkts or whatever it was, and it's like, yeah, he kind of like, opened my eyes to like, why are we working so strenuously, like, I mean I know it's a hard job but like, we have got to look at a better way to do it. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

Farm work as exercise, bodily health

Many apprentices spoke of farm work in terms of healthy physical activity. They thought of the manual labor of the farm as exercise As in:

I love being outside, and I like working, being active, and I don't have to work out anymore, which is nice! (laughs). And I can eat whatever I want! I just like being outside and being in nature all the time. I get mega depressed if I'm not outside a good amount. (Patricia, Apprentice)

The below apprentice relates the work with bodily health as well. She says:

And the drastic change my body went through once I started doing that I was like, 15 pounds slid off. Yeah. It was crazy, it was like, this is, they always say you are what you eat. You don't really take that literally unless you're talking about donuts or whatever, but it's really, you are what you eat. But in a good way, I want to be what I'm eating by eating this awesome plant that's out there. And eating some really cool plants. (Vera, Apprentice)

The below apprentice says “the farm is my gym”:

The farm is my gym and I love it. I'm outside, I'm always lifting, I'm always working, I'm walking everywhere. I probably walk 15 miles a day easy. It's a lot of fun. (Patricia, Apprentice)

One of the promotional materials for the two-wheel tractor, disseminated at one of the workshops, touts exercise as one of the reasons to purchase the two-wheel tractor:

[DOCUMENT] Provides excellent exercise...

And the below promotional material discusses a healthy smoothie recipe. It says:

[DOCUMENT] Green smoothies are growing in popularity.... Pick up any combination of dark leafy greens (kale and spinach are recommended), and then add microgreens and wheatgrass.

And the below apprentice discusses health:

The food that you're eating, the people you're surrounded with, all affect your health ultimately, and people don't realize that to begin with. But I don't know what intelligent person the quote is from but saying that "your health is the greatest wealth you can have." It's something that definitely resonates with us, like we're happy with what we have. (Flynn, Third Year Apprentice)

Yoga was also a theme to emerge within the activity system. Many practiced yoga, and even saw their farm work as something to be done as part of yoga practice, or overlapping yoga practice. Many did yoga stretches during breaks, for example. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] The leader of the workshop [a farmer] says he tries to make it a dance. He tries to use the Henderson method to change up his routine and guide his physical labor on a daily basis. He therefore sees his physical labor in light of fitness – work out – yoga – spirituality on a daily basis. With every movement.

The below field note details one workshop that included yoga, led by a farmer:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] today's workshop spent about 20-30 minutes leading yoga poses. The conference also had sessions devoted to yoga for farmers.

The below apprentice describes how she first came in contact with a farm, at which she later worked as a volunteer, through a yoga studio:

I was volunteering, or doing a work trade at a yoga studio in a town that I lived in, and there was an organic farm that did a CSA that dropped off at the yoga studio, so that's how like I heard the name [farm name] farm, was the farm, and I was like, huh, I should check that out! It sounds cool! (Faith, 2nd Year Apprentice)

Many would talk about yoga as an assumption that others practiced it. As in:

[One apprentice to another apprentice, says] you have something out of whack man, you need more yoga. That'll get you realigned. (Vera, Apprentice)

Another apprentice says she thinks about yoga poses while she is in the field:

When I'm harvesting I think back to how I should bend over, the monkey man pose, and I go back to making things a dance... you lose it., you lose your posture, but then you return to it. (Valerie, Apprentice)

Yoga was a significant theme to emerge. The fact that the farm work itself is seen as exercise, even yoga practice, by farmers and apprentices alike, shows that some are negotiating their own manual labor identities to be a class-appropriate activity, by recasting dirty work as exercise.

Inefficient Labor of Apprentices

So we have seen that apprentices were often still in the process of negotiating a manual labor identity. If there is a learning curve to performing new tasks competently, often, apprentices were still within the upswing of the learning curve. As my field note records:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Rick keeps drifting off into the pigweed in the next row, slowly clipping way more than what is necessary to clean out the bed that we need to finish. He is carrying every pigweed plant to the end of the row as he clips.

At another time, I recorded the lack of competence using certain tools. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Apprentice did not know how to use various tools (not skilled with hammer and nail, exacto knife) and had to be shown.

I recorded many miscommunications and tensions within the work flow between Rick and Ross. They are one example of a basically dysfunctional apprentice-farmer relationship, where Rick left halfway through the season. The below records a miscommunication they had:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] We were sent to lay drip line underneath plastic, since plastic had been laid while Ross didn't notice the drip tape spool had run out while he was laying plastic on his tractor. Note: Ross later said it had been Rick's job to tell him when the drip tape ran out but he didn't. I think this happened several days ago. Rick said the drip tape ran out after Ross sent Rick to do another task.

The inefficient work of apprentices is often frustrating to farmers. The below farmer laments that his apprentice was not skilled with a weed whacker and broke the weed whacker. The farmer seems to think the apprentice intentionally “misled” him, but having heard both sides of the story, it is my opinion that the apprentice simply lacked enough experience to judge his own competence level. He says:

Part of that is like, if I can get anything across to interns throughout the country through your study, it is to be honest and straight forward with your employer, because I really feel that Rick misled me, of his ability, And I mean, straight up lying to me, and also you know, not being clear in communication. Like, you ever run a weed whacker before? Oh yeah! All right great. Go weed whack. So now the weed whacker's in the shop for the third time. (Ross, Farmer)

In the below, the farmer does not get visibly, emotionally upset, but a serious confusion caused the crew to have to redo a task.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] More transplanting, more confusion. Hank explained then left to go get more supplies. In the meantime, [three of the apprentices] have laid out transplants the wrong way, mixing varieties together (even though they do look different – cukes and zephyrs). The math is weird for some (Hank explains it in a more complicated way – “every 3 then one in the middle”). We have to pull out, then replant a row, which does get done. Hank is patient as he deals with all the talking of staff (many questions asked before Hank has a chance to finish explaining, which makes things even more confusing). Confusion, and mistakes of the apprentices.

And the below is a miscommunication, where the apprentice misunderstands the task and potentially cost money to the farm. My field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] and I pull a small bed of onions while [Farmer] is running tractor in other field. We have pulled onions when all he wanted us to do was clean up the celery root bed of weeds. [Farmer] sees us carrying back the onions and has a puzzled look on his face. There was a miscommunication about the bed we should “salvage” which apparently is language that [farmer] has used previously to talk about picking everything in the bed, and [apprentice] misunderstood.

Reflexively, I was occasionally unsure how my presence affected work flow. Often, an apprentice and I would be working a row of crops together, and I would want to stay close to them for data collection purposes, while also working efficiently myself in order to “earn my keep.” This meant pacing was sometimes challenging. As in the below field note:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] works slightly slower than do I. [Apprentice] sometimes stops moving his hands to talk, and it makes me uncomfortable, since I know we should keep working and I don't want to distract him.

In this instance, I was not sure if the apprentice was deferring to me on a task. The farmer later said:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer to me] I was just noticing that [Apprentice] was just standing there while you're doing the work, and it was pretty goofy. (Farmer)

Othering wage/migrant farmworkers

One conspicuously absent element in the discourse within this activity system was the idea that most work on farms is performed for a wage, by migrant farmworkers. If prompted, the category of farmworker was often summarily disregarded as important to the work within this activity system (although on rare occasions, expressing social justice concerns). As in:

When I think of migrant labor I think of huge farms, huge fields full of small Mexican children working for nothing. But smaller scale farms, I have no frame of reference for how much. I guess I know – to me, I feel conflicted about something, but I don't remember what. On the one hand I'm like, I guess I am not here to understand. It's like a lot of work, it's physical labor, whatever, I feel like I had a formed thought. Um, but on the one hand I want there to be jobs in agriculture for migrant workers, that pay them a fair wage and that, I want that to be available, on the other hand, like I don't – I feel like it's too much up to the farmer, to not take advantage of that. So I want it less regulated but also more regulated, so that people are protected and safe, but also so that like, food gets produced. And I think it's a completely different conversation. In my head it's completely different when I think about big farms, like Tyson poultry. I have a completely different thought on that than I have about small farms incorporating migrant labor. (Paula, Apprentice)

This farmer also sees wage labor as irrelevant to his farm system. He does not think a farm laborer would “work very well.” He says:

We've never hired somebody who's strictly a farm laborer, and I don't think that would work very well with our systems at all. I mean we don't do enough of any one thing to train and that sort of thing, and it's just, yeah. (Frank, Farmer)

One of the larger farms who hosted a workshop did, however, employ migrant farm labor.

During this tour, a common sentiment was that participants had never been on a farm of that size.

The farmer was asked to justify why he hired migrant workers. He explained that labor was hard

to find locally. I saw evidence of shade structures, bathrooms, and water containers in the field, and the farmer gave them space to garden and a chef-prepared meal once a week. The way the subject was treated, with a mixture of awe, curiosity, and trepidation, however, indicates how the presence of farmworkers was problematic within the imaginary of farming to at least some of the participants. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Hire local folks but they only stick around for a week or two 'this is hard work.' Or 'hey I found another job.' The farmer had said that part of the H2A program is you hire 'just as many local people as you bring in on visas,' so they advertise locally. [Local] People don't work out.

The few instances where migrant farm workers were mentioned in the activity system belied the fact that they were not thought of as subjects within the system, but were marginalized, thought of as outside of it.

CHAT-Object/Goal

CHAT analysis also focuses attention on the object of the activity undertaken by actors within the system. In this system, analysis revealed three distinctly different objects for undertaking apprenticeship activity, for all present in various roles – apprentices, farmers, and others. The first object is inexpensive labor to farms. Second, the apprentices are there to learn farming and become beginning farmers themselves. Third, the apprentices aim to spend the growing season having an authentic, meaningful “farming lifestyle” experience. While some beginning farmers were former apprentices, the vast majority of apprentices do not express high levels of commitment to continue in farming.

Object: Train Beginning Farmers

The object to train beginning farmers was the most repeated and expressed goal behind apprenticeship activity. The website of the local mediating organization has the below as a condition to participating as a farm in the networking elements of the educational programs:

[DOCUMENT] Farms are dedicated to training new farmers by providing education as a pinnacle element of their apprenticeship program. (website)

The website also encourages participating farms to follow best practices for professionalized management and legal compliance, but they are unable to enforce these for participation (which leads to a wide range of actual practices on farms, as this data suggests). The below educator describes a negotiation between ideals and professionalism:

And so a lot of what we're trying to do is re-educate people about that, and sort of raise that professionalism up, in that it is a profession that requires training, just like being a plumber or an electrician or a nurse or a teacher, um, and we've lost a lot of our traditional training methods, which was, kids growing up on the farm or working in the summers. When you're on a full-on farm and having more of that organic transition of knowledge for the next generation. So we're having to kind of re-create it. (Bridget, Educator)

The below farmer, Hank, also agrees that beginning farmer training is an object. He says:

I think agriculture and growing food is a pretty important service to society. Passing it on to the next generation is certainly something that needs to be done... Yeah so why should I hoard it [knowledge] in here, if my understanding of it is actually more or less correct? Pass it on. And so I guess more of the older, just the excitement of understanding the system, that's most of it. But as I get older, the idea of leaving some legacy. (Hank, Farmer)

Another farmer's motivation is to train beginning farmers. He says:

I just love that there's something almost medieval about the systems, of like, this is how you train for the job... there's no way that it can replicate this kind of training... Like the work trade system. (Victor, Farmer)

And the below participant shares this motivation:

You know there are issues with apprentices and everything but I think they are an invaluable part of the farming path. Every beginning farmer should do an

apprentice at some point, but I know that sounds really hard for some people in their lives, but it is just such a valuable process and I really believe in the benefit that they have for so many people (Bridget, Educator)

Apprenticeship exists to train beginning farmers – is legitimized and reified as an expressed rule.

As the below apprentice, who had worked on several farms as an apprentice, explains:

Pay, no. But it's an apprenticeship. No apprenticeship pays well. Um, they pay what they can afford, So each farm is different. Uh, and it's not a full time job, I guess. So you're paying for the education, in your labor, so you're there, as opposed to you paying for the knowledge. So that's worked in. (Hector, Apprentice)

Object: Inexpensive Labor for the “In-the-Know” Farms

A theme that also emerged, however, was that apprentices are serving as inexpensive labor on the farm. While this was talked about in a different way than the educational object, this was still a very strong theme to emerge. The below farmer, former apprentice shows just how low the pay may be for an apprentice (and in my data this is a common figure):

It's cheap labor. It's free labor for the most part, if you're paying \$200 – I feel bad saying, but I was \$200 a month, to me, that's bad selection on my part. But I feel like that's a lot of money, but it's like \$300 a month, even \$400 a month, it's coming out to cents on the hour, that's about as free labor as it gets, that's pretty outrageous! (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

And the below farmer, former apprentice, agrees:

When you're an apprentice, you're just the grunt labor I guess (June, Farmer, former apprentice)

The farmer goes on to critique the use of apprentices, saying that farmers often use apprentices for their primary labor force year after year. She says:

Or like as a new farmer, if you started with apprentices, and then once you figured it out, like you segue to the employee model, but that just doesn't seem to happen. But it just seems to be like perma apprentice and I just wonder like what will happen to your farm after you're done farming it? Because eventually our bodies give way! Like what is the plan? Why not have employees invested in running that exactly the way you want it run?

The below farmer is very thankful, and acknowledges the arrangement described above. He says:

I'd say we pretty much tried everything, but apprentices are like, we could not do what we do without them. There's just no way. They're such a – it impresses me every year that people want to get paid nothing to like bust their ass, and I'm like extremely thankful.

And during the below workshop, the farmer makes reference to the apprentices at the farm as the primary workforce. He says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Farmer acknowledges apprentices during pre-meal talk, saying “thanks to the apprentices for working here and making the farm a farm, without them, all this wouldn't be happening.”

The below farmer recalled to me how he had not intended to rely on apprentices for labor, however, that was the scenario that developed during farming. He expressed, at another time, a desire to have paid employees. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Victor (farmer): I realized, we're fucked! We're totally dependent on apprentices for labor!

And the below participant is thoughtful about how the farm system that must rely on apprentices who work for little to no pay is not as financially sustainable. They say:

I see that, too, more – there are different stages used to get into farm work and sometimes volunteer labor at first, or work trade, is one step, and then you have WWOOFing [Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, an online scheme to link farms with volunteers], and then I think a lot of farms end up relying on that, which I have mixed feelings about, in general, because I think that could become really exploitative too, and I definitely think it's um, doesn't really bode well for the sustainability of a farm if you're having to rely on that. Um, and then there's the apprentice-internship level and then you have paid employees, and I think a mixture of that isn't, can be healthy and it can work for different people in different ways. I think it's just thinking through your systems and your set up and your whole farm income needs and what not, and yeah there are definitely farms out there that are not doing any of those things well. It's a tough place to be I think.

Object: Authenticity, Lifestyle Experience

Many within the activity system expressed that the purpose of engaging in apprenticeship activity was the search for an experience that was “real” or “meaningful.” Ross expresses a common sentiment, below:

[Apprentices think] Something is lacking in their life, and they somehow discovered that thing is probably organic farming, I think they, a lot of em, might be better off with like a meditation class, seeking some spirituality, uh, a lot of em aren't quite cut out for it... But what people are seeking is something real, and that could be accomplished by having a loving family, eating a good meal, doing some real service to god or less fortunate people, but those things seem maybe people have some other aversion. They don't get along with their family, maybe weird people come out, they think going to a small African village for a year would be wrong, and they're like, no, I want to be an organic farmer! (Ross, Farmer)

While the below apprentice also conveys his rationale for undertaking an apprentice as it related to finding a more meaningful pursuit

Just it's an amazing way to spend three months. You have housing provided, you have access to great food, and interesting people...make young people aware that this is an option, in terms of apprenticing for the summer versus working for a consulting firm, something that I don't think is as meaningful or fulfilling. (Apprentice)

So as per the above, apprentices often undertake an apprenticeship because they are seeking something real or meaningful. The below apprentice does not seem to be able to articulate a thorough rationale for undertaking an apprenticeship, but hinted that the lifestyle appealed to her:

Yeah I don't have a good reason, it just occurred to me that that might be an interesting way to spend a summer. And I loved it, I was outdoors, I was tanned and it was awesome. (Apprentice)

The below apprentice wanted to “enjoy the next year or something.” He says:

Before I started applying online, I said, I am a recent college graduate, I don't want to be responsible, I want to enjoy the next year or something, and I really like the idea of farming, I'll try it out for 9 months, and if I hate it, I can live through 9 months, and if I love it then maybe I'll keep doing it. (Apprentice)

Many apprentices did not seem to have a commitment to farming after the apprenticeship concluded.

I just want to prove to myself I can do it. I think a lot of kids are so lazy these days, they'd rather spend their summer just [dismissive hand gesture], but hey you get to spend the summer learning about how to grow your own food.

Many apprentices expressed a low commitment to become a commercial farmer.

Ideally, like some day in the future I would like to get a job working at like kind of like an urban farm or like community garden, like community center that has that, where hopefully in some sort of like manager kind of position where I'm like overseeing like the running of the farm or doing a lot of the farming, but then at the same time, doing outreach programs or teaching, like teaching kids, or teaching adults, stuff like that where it's kind of like, connecting um, people who live in a city or don't like, necessarily have any other resources or access to that, like connecting them to like, yeah, this is gardening! This is farming! This is getting back to it, you know, this is totally doable for you and like, everyone. Um hopefully. Something like that. The connection between people and actual farming, and actual food, is really important to me, so I think I'm trying to build up to that, so I need that knowledge of, OK this is how you actually farm. Like I need to know all that first before I can teach that to other people. But yeah so, right now once the season ends I probably going to travel a little bit, or try WWOOFing for a little bit, just so I'm doing something, and then maybe kind of like get a temporary job somewhere (Apprentice)

The below apprentice shows a low commitment to farming as well. He says:

For the fall, prob going to move to Pittsburg where my sister's going to be, I'll live with her and her boyfriend and work at a farm to table restaurant, or like a bakery, or a butcher, or something where I can learn a little bit but also, just be in a different part of the food system.

And the below apprentice also shows low commitment to farming as a profession. He says:

[Undertaking the apprenticeship] was out of curiosity and my romantic idea of farm life, but now it's a question of whether to farm professionally that I want to answer. And at the core, I just want learn how to grow my own food. (Vance, Apprentice)

And the below farmer discusses that some apprentices want to “hang out on a farm” more than they want to work on the farm. He says:

That's the whole application. So, some people can't get it together to do that, so that screens out other folks. And there's some, um, key words, like, "hang out on a farm," (laughs) that are kind of a red flag. (Hank, Farmer)

The below apprentice desires a meaningful experience, rather than just an exchange:

For me, life isn't worth anything if you're not constantly building relationships and getting to know people and understanding who they are, and I think that's how we grow as people. So if it were just an exchange of knowledge for free labor, knowledge for whatever, like what's the point? For me. (Patricia, Apprentice)

The below apprentice wants the sense of community of apprenticing. She says:

We had a group of 5 interns and community volunteers that would come every day, so on any given workday there were about 20 people on the farm, and it was a beehive of conversation, and laughing, and harvesting, and we'd have a potluck after our workdays, and I thought, I want to live like this every day, just to be around people who were curious, intelligent, and passionate about food. Yeah. And that's one reason why I chose to do it again this summer. Seeking out that same experience. (Valerie, Apprentice)

The below apprentice wanted to learn but expressed low commitment to farming. She says:

I kind of, I just wanted to take in as much info as I could and these guys, and definitely talking to them, it was like, Ok they know what they're doing. So I just wanted to be a sponge. To come down here and take up as much as I can, and input as much as I could, um, cuz we all have our little strengths and things that we can bring to the table but it was definitely just, to learn. And I don't have to – I'm definitely not going to start a farm tomorrow, I know it costs a bunch of money but that's why I started. (Vera, Apprentice)

Farms in the activity system must be “in-the-know,” which means “sustainable.” This is reified in the local mediating organization’s website of the inclusion criteria to be a part of the network.

It says:

[DOCUMENT] Farms are actively engaged in the local community. Farms are using organic and/or sustainable production methods. Organic certification and other certifications are not required, but we do ask that farms and farmers are “in-the-know” and conscientiously practicing organic standards.(website)

Farmers and other actors therefore considered the inexpensive labor provided by apprentices to be an important object of the activity system.

Conflict Between Objects

In seeing the different objects of activity through the CHAT lens, I noticed that often, tensions and cognitive dissonance were due to a conflict between different objects being expressed at different times. The same system actor might express one purpose at one time, and another purpose at another time, but endure difficulty negotiating the conflict between the two. A conflict between objects is often generative of meaning (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011).

For example, the apprentice expressed to me that she was not satisfied with learning that was taking place in lieu of the work that had to be done.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] said: "I feel I am interrupting when I ask a question. It's really hard work. I'm not learning as much as I expected to learn. This is different than what I expected."

The below farmer, former apprentice, explains how they think the teaching element should be better emphasized. Because the educational imperative is the most often expressed, reified, and official rationale for apprenticeship activity, it is revisited here. He says:

If your pay is an education, you should be being hands on taught. From a person that's done it for years!

Below, Jack ruminates on the lifestyle of the small, diversified farmer, and how your typical apprentice would conclude that they would not want this lifestyle due to the work life balance issues.

Yeah cuz it's your life. I think that is the biggest challenge is separating your work from your life, cuz a lot of people, they're the same thing. They don't get off the farm much cuz that's – the cows have to be milked at 7, chickens need to go up, someone needs to close the door, at 8, so we can't go get a beer, and that – "that's definitely not the lifestyle for me!" I mean, it works for some people, but, there are a lot of uncomfortable situations built into apprentices that I feel like you would never think of – I definitely didn't going into it.

The below apprentice discusses her negative reaction to seeing the work-life balance of the farmer and not being able to see herself in that lifestyle.

I don't know, it's just not my thing... It's a lot of work. He [the farmer] has a hard schedule, I mean, farming, and then he barely has a day off. He's either on the farm, or he's at market, and it's kind of an all-day thing. So it seems like kind of a pain in the ass... I'm not opposed to it, it's just not necessarily like, I'm all gung ho about it. It's not on the top of my list. It's a lot of work. (Apprentice)

A general conversation in a small group of apprentices emerged at one of the workshops, concerning hours worked at each farm. Apprentices were comparing the typical day's structure and noticing that some apprentices were working longer hours than others. They noticed that the apprentice, when viewed as inexpensive labor, should not be exploited for long hours. It is noteworthy here that apprentices were discussing the object of their activity as inexpensive labor, and came to this conclusion, whereas at other times, the idea of living the farm lifestyle superseded the thinking of the same apprentices, and they are more positive about working long hours. The field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Saying if the farmer wants to work long hours, that's OK, because they are making more money, but the apprentice is not.

Ross recalls tension he had with former apprentices over learning, since they complained that they had done more labor than learning. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Ross] had two former apprentices who were not putting their work into learning, and they went to nonviolent communication class/facilitator. They had said "I didn't learn a thing!" at the end of the season. Then the nonviolent communication facilitator made them reflect on their actions and apologize, which [Ross] laughed over.

The below apprentice recounts the last farm he was on, where he was unhappy, where he was told to "weed for twelve hours." He says:

[Current situation is] such a better situation than like [former situation], "well aren't you learning stuff?" like, go weed for twelve hours! (Rick, Apprentice)

Frank recounts another conflict among goals for apprenticeship activity. He had one apprentice he thought did not have the educational goal in mind for the farm apprenticeship. He says:

I feel like [apprentice] got more and more disgruntled towards the end of the summer, just because she didn't want to be a farmer. She took the apprentice because it was a convenient way to move to the area. (Frank, Farmer)

The below educator says that apprentices who do not continue farming will still go on to be “farming and food advocates.” She says:

I think it's great if people do apprenticeships and then decide they don't want to farm! Like that's a success too, because you're helping them realize a better direction for themselves and potentially saving them a lot of money or time and other investments, but then I think because they have this full understanding of what it's like to farm and raise food, they're gonna be farming and food advocates for the rest of their lives. Which I think is huge and just as valuable in some ways as folks who go into farming after that. (Bridget, Educator)

Jack, a farmer, former apprentice is sarcastically critical of the educational purpose of apprenticeship, and thinks that many who host apprentices have poor management. He says:

Yeah, it comes out to less than a dollar an hour, you know? And the trade off is an education. You're “learning how to farm” [scare quotes tone of voice] and it's like, that's not how I want to farm! Ever! I don't ever want to have people bent over in the field, doing something that I wasn't able to manage properly, and that's just how I view it, and again, it's easy, I guess, to say it, and now that we're farming our own land, a little bit, I do feel like you can get behind on things, but not to that extent, where you apply people. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

As we have seen above, it is a contested idea that all apprenticeship activity is towards a learning experience, for the purposes of beginning farmer training. However, the rule is consistently upheld that apprenticeship activity is primarily to train beginning farmers in the hard skills of how to farm. When ineffectively applied, however, the social dynamic of teaching becomes a source of conflict and tension. In the below scenario that I witnessed, Ross, the farmer, was using teaching how to water correctly, to discipline Rick, the apprentice, in a

demeaning fashion. Some time after the below incident, Rick expressed to me his dissatisfaction with the way Ross uses education to discipline. Below is my field note entry:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Ross confronts Rick on how he is watering. I tried to actually not follow the apprentice into the high tunnel, since I sensed that this would be embarrassing for Rick, but Ross calls me in. Then he turns to Rick and says “OK, Rick, show me how you water.” Rick proceeds to water in what looks like a fairly reasonable way, but Ross points out mistakes as Rick waters. He says “you see how the plants look like this? That’s because you’re not watering.” He instructs Rick to go to the library during lunch break and look up information about watering and plant diseases. Yellow holes on leaves, slug trails, yellowing extends to nasturtium which is planted as companion to tomato.

In another instance, Ross also used teaching to patronize and belittle Rick. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] At the task’s end, Ross noticed the trays were arranged differently than he had attempted to direct Rick to do. Ross came out and said to Rick: “remember what I showed ya? I said to do it this way!” (in a patronizing and overtly unkind tone). But the trays were only slightly different, and Ross had not communicated in that level of depth.

Ross described one of the last conversations he had with the apprentice, who wound up leaving the farm as a result of malcontent. He recounts how he had tried to “get through” to Rick about how much money he had cost him. After viewing interactions between Ross and Rick, I am convinced that this was likely related in an adversarial manner. Ross explained the conversation in the below terms:

Some people are like, not teachable. Like Rick just didn’t – we had a good conversation, the last conversation we had, like it was actually, it seems like I did get through to him actually. I explained the thousands of dollars that it cost me. And I explained the reputation where 20 people come out here in a couple weeks to look at [farm product] growing, and they only see half a field planted, they’re gonna ask me why. And if major national [farm product] buyers ask me, how’s the [hand gesture to mean, blank] coming? And I say, oh I haven’t planted it. They’re gonna ask me why. And I’m gonna have to come up with a good reason, and oh it’s Rick’s fault. It’s management’s fault too, all right? And so it falls on me. Rick’s reputation as an herb grower, [pppft! Sound to mean “nothing”]. Doesn’t affect anything. That’s how I feel. Often in corporate lawsuits and

whatever, ultimately the management doesn't get responsibility for it, but, I feel that way. (Ross, Farmer)

So the farmer wants to blame the apprentice for lost product and reputation, but accepts responsibility for the actions of the apprentice. His retelling of the conversation also makes it sound like the conversation was at least somewhat demeaning for the apprentice.

Another apprentice was dismissed from the farm where she worked. The farmer recounted:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer recalled to me that she had] said [Apprentice] was "irresponsible," and [Apprentice] apparently said "no one has ever called me that before." [Farmer] recounted that she replied "well who's going to call you irresponsible? I'm your employer so I think you're irresponsible!" (Patty, Farmer)

In the above, the farmer attaches a somewhat demoralizing label to the apprentice. The dynamic of teacher-to-student may potentially encourage the delivery of an explanation, along with the label "irresponsible." In the context of explaining the dismissal, she discussed her way of thinking through when she has to dismiss an apprentice. She says:

If you challenge my patience all the time, you're not making me better, you're making me frustrated, and you've got to go. Bottom line. You can be sweet and kind and I can like you, I just don't want you working on my farm. And that's what I say. I like you and I want to continue to like you, therefore you must leave. I mean. They're not bad people, there's nothing wrong with you, just because you're not cut out for farm work does not mean that there's anything wrong with you, it just means you are talented somewhere else and you need to be doing something else. Where's your gift? Everyone has one, so go find it, good luck. Like I said, I've helped people find jobs, I've moved em off. I've never just kicked em off. I'm like, ok, I know something that will be really great for you. Lot of times they're like, uh, then all of a sudden you're right instead of them arguing. (Patty, Farmer)

So the above farmer has told apprentices that they are not "cut out for farm work," which may be demoralizing to hear. The farmer also has helped apprentices find another job. The teacher-student relationship is one of vested interest, whereas a boss-employee relationship is more

transactional, less involved. For this reason, a teacher-student relationship can venture into the patronizing, the labeling in order to “teach.” Thus, the emphasis on education within this activity system can occasionally be transformed into demoralizing behaviors at times.

CHAT-Tools, Sociomaterial

Activity was constantly mediated by many different sociomaterial tools and artifacts, and my field notes bear witness to many tools and artifacts that were a part of the activity system. CHAT enables us to understand the sociomaterial within a system as socially constructed, hence the use of the term “sociomaterial” (Fenwick, Sawchuk, Edwards, 2011, p. 1). In this system, materials often had a very obvious and expressed historical importance, which related to the symbolic forms of agrarianism, described above. Hand labor, for example, was valorized. Tool usage was often translated through the ascetic bent, as simple was often seen as better in an aesthetic sense (as in the use of a pointy stick to dig, described below), and toughness was needed to use these inadequate tools. Also, the tractor was a highly debated boundary object that was a constant reminder of the negotiation of romanticized agrarianism v. productivism on farms.

As the simplest form of observation within ethnographic methodology, I recorded material objects within the sites I observed. A few of the more prominent material objects were: built landscapes and structures (rows, plastic, plants, packing sheds, high tunnels, row cover, soil, compost, weeds), heavy farm equipment (trucks, tractors, off-road vehicles, attachments); hand tools (stirrup hoe, clippers, knives, gloves, misc), savvy media usage: books, documentaries, scientific knowledge (2-sides) of ecology, economy; knowledge of permaculture, principles of organic gardening and food, knowledge of yoga, meditation, mindfulness; natural landscapes (mountains, creeks, sun, trees). These were recorded in field notes such as the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Physical objects: trowel, gloves, weeds, clover, mud and dirt, leaves and roots, loose and unwieldy clumps of dirty root balls and grass clumps, big heavy bins, beautiful view.

And in field notes like the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Spaces: garden plots, barn, barn lot, greenhouse, farm store, ridge kitchen. Animal pens, gazebo.

And also like the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] TOOLS: transplanting: trowel, soil knives, crazy tape, string, trellis marker above. Fence work: clippers, loppers, bolt cutters, tin snips, fence post ripper-outer, fence post driver, thick wire.

These records lend important insights into how the physical objects were being used by participants and how they were being used as elements of the performative practice of actors in the system.

Hand Labor

In the data, an important theme to emerge was the emphasis placed on hand labor, even when there was no obvious reason why tools were not being used to make the labor faster and easier. Nevertheless, tools were often shunned in lieu of labor by hand. Many expressed the value of being able to do the work with their hands. As in:

My favorite part is just getting your hands in the dirt. That's why I love picking up potatoes. We were talking about that when we were out there doing the fingerlings. You're like searching for a little prize, your golden treasure. Um, that's why I'm barefoot most of the time. I like to feel the mud between my toes and just really get in there. That's fun. Yeah.

The local mediating organization put out a promotion for apprenticing, which urged would-be apprentices to peruse new listings of farms that have apprentice openings. It says:

*[DOCUMENT] Get your feet on the ground and your hands in the dirt!
(promotion for apprenticing)*

The below farmer weeded spiny pigweed, a plant with hard spines 1-3 cm long, with no gloves, and mentioned that a farmer should know how to weed without gloves.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Ross [farmer] weeding with bare hands – no gloves. Briefly explained how one would weed pigweed with no gloves.

My field notes are full of entries of hand weeding, such as the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Weeding 8 hours, 80-90% of weeds are spiny pigweed. My leather gloves are working well but still getting stabbed with pigweed. Rashes and scratched everywhere.

And as in the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Weeding with no tools... (why by hand? Why no soil knives or one-tine cultivators?)

And, again, in the below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] sent us out to do pigweed again. [Apprentice] has no tools except gloves. This could have been accomplished with the stirrup hoe.

The below also shows the value placed on hand labor, when the apprentice was asked to just “freehand it.” My field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Farmer to apprentice: cutting the siding, “why are you using the guide to cut? Just free hand it.” (Note: This is expensive siding and we don’t have any extra, so bad cuts would be very difficult to fix)

Many apprentices expressed negative feelings about hand labor. For example:

There’s hand weeding, which I hate. I don’t think anyone likes hand weeding. (Hector, Apprentice)

And the below apprentice calls the job “mindless.” He says:

And to just do those jobs over and over again, it’s mindless. Weeding is mindless. That’s not a very fun job. (Hector, Apprentice)

In the above, we see that hand labor was often used, but not always viewed in a positive light. In sum, the emphasis on hand labor was an important theme to emerge in the data.

Tools were often Makeshift, Nonfunctional, or Inefficient

There were many instances when the tools offered for use were makeshift or caused bodily discomfort. Often, alternate tools were available on the farm, or available and inexpensive at any farm/garden supply store, but it did not appear anyone had thought to use them. The use of a pointy stick to churn up soil and then direct seed into several 1,000 foot rows or tractor-laid plastic is a good example of a tool that was not designed with efficiency of labor in mind. If the stick had been longer, like a broom handle, its user would have been able to avoid stoop labor for the four hours that this task took. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] “Chain Gang” to hand seed various herbs into [two 1,000-foot rows of tractor-laid plastic with] holes using a pointy stick... The Pointy stick not long enough to do it in standing position.

At one farm, 17-gallon rope handled plastic tubs were being used, while I noticed a wheelbarrow in the shed at another time. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Big heavy bins are the type you’d use for beer bucket at a party, not to haul clumps of weeds. When full of weeds these are way too heavy to carry across the farm, but we did it anyway. Intern did not suggest each taking a handle so we would only carry half the weight at a time – I followed along and we each carried our own. Weighed approx. 55 lbs.

A similar container was used at another farm:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] was plunking the beets into a big Rubbermaid tub with holes drilled into it, which I saw at least 5-6 of on the farm, so that seems to be the carrying container of choice for veggies (way too much to carry when full of beets. Approx. 60 lbs. [Apprentice] carried them back.).

The below farm had a large assortment of raised beds that were boxed in by wood, which forced anyone working the beds to bend into an uncomfortable position. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Beds were raised and boxed in wooden boxes. Beds were 4.5' wide and soil had sunk in about one foot. This meant that we had to bend over very far to do weeding. Weeding was done with gloves only. No other tools. The bent over position put a lot of strain on the back and legs.

One apprentice was not given a container in which to place tomatoes, although the farmer was present. She placed them in her small tank top. My field note is as follows:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Apprentice] put tomatoes in her tiny shirt, against her skin, when she needed to carry them.

At one farm, the makeshift planting benches (which consisted of boards on cinder blocks) were constructed so as not to have an aisle between them where someone could access the plants.

When we moved the plant starts, the construction necessitated climbing on the structure, which was an inefficient, if not dangerous, and led to an uncomfortable situation and loss of several plant trays. Below is my field note:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] wound up dropping one whole tray of plant starts (he was climbing all over the wooden structure, moving things about since they could not be reached otherwise). [With hardly a mention, Apprentice] wound up cleaning up the dropped tray carefully for ten minutes, while [Farmer] ignored him. after which there came no thanks or acknowledgement for [Apprentice].

In another instance, the parking brake on the all-terrain vehicle was broken, and the apprentices did not seem to take seriously the implications for making sure a block was put behind the tire of the vehicle, on a farm with hilly terrain. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] The [all-terrain vehicle] started to roll down the hill as we began to unpack potatoes. I noticed first and instinctively ran around, jumped in the driver's seat and braked. No one seemed that shocked, [Apprentice] got the block that is supposed to be behind the wheel. I said I acted on instinct, and [Apprentice] said "we could use those instincts around here, we might have just watched it roll down the hill!" (jokingly)

In another instance, one screwdriver was being shared between myself and another apprentice, which caused us to work more slowly through a tedious task. There were likely more screwdrivers on the farm, but tools were disorganized. Below is my field note:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Another apprentice and I] put away old plant stuff (dumped excess soil into centrally located compost pile). Each unit had to be cleared of soil and we shared one screwdriver, passing it back and forth, to poke out the dirt and accomplish this task. Left small-celled trays to dry in sun. Then we set to weeding. We weeded one 1,000-foot row of yarrow, pulling out spiny pigweed and grass from holes in the plastic, careful not to destroy the yarrow (which was being dwarfed by the spiny pigweed). This was very time consuming and physically painful.

At another farm, the method for picking milk oats meant that it took a lot longer, since we were given a paper bag in which to carry them, which needed to be grasped in one hand, and carefully guarded from spilling. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Pick milk oats – inefficient method that required a paper bag, which requires one hand to hold.

Another apprentice reports that farmers had been using a paper mulch layer (tractor attachment), which was apparently requiring them to follow the tractor “on hands and knees.”

[The farmers] literally crawl across the field on hands and knees to cover it up. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

As another example of faulty and makeshift tools, one apprentice was asked to use a chemical with a respirator that was reportedly faulty. He said:

Ross had given me a faulty respirator that was full of mold and did not work. I couldn't taste anything but oxidate for a week! He's GAP certified but that was not a G – A – P! (Rick, Apprentice)

At another farm, I, along with an apprentice and a farm employee, were asked to drape a large shade cloth over the high tunnel. We were given insufficient tools to do the job, and the job took approximately two hours.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Hanging high tunnel shade cloth – not given proper tools (no working ladder) or instruction. Huge mess getting this old, torn up, twisted up shade cloth pulled over and flat against this old high tunnel. The cloth got twisted and remained lopsided and not even cinched down at the end (despite that being the original plan). The cloth remained loose and could blow in the wind and its raggedy edges could get caught up in the high tunnel fan, but because communication was such a challenge (and despite my pointing this out) nothing was done about it.

My field notes were heavily populated with questions regarding tool usage, which was informed by my previous employment on small, diversified, direct marketing farms and other exposure to commercial agriculture. For example, in the below, I question the hand weeding 1,000-foot rows of spiny pigweed without use of any hand tools, and only provisioned with cotton work gloves (although I had seen leather gloves earlier in another work space):

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] (why did not everyone have the little cultivators? Dandelion weeders or soil knife? Not to mention thicker gloves?) We were ill-quipped to be dealing with spiny pigweed all day.

To me as a participant observer, there was no clear reason why we did not have simple hand tools, since hand tools do not require a large input of natural resources to purchase and maintain. Others on the farm did not point out their lack of proper equipment or hand tools. At a later date, I brought several of my own small hand tools from home. This yielded the insight that apprentices had not thought anything was missing.

Tractor as Boundary Object

The tractor was used as a boundary to what sorts of farming would be seen as acceptable. Farmers that used tractors often had to go to extra lengths to justify their tractor use. Many

apprentices disavowed their use completely. The below apprentice cannot identify as affiliated with a tractor, and calls the tractor “monstrous.”

I am not a tractor girl! Oh my god they scare me. It's too loud, it's too monstrous. (Faith, Apprentice)

The next apprentice also disavows tractor use and puts forth horses as a more valued alternative:

I don't know if I ever want to be big enough to use a tractor, kind of thing. Maybe I'll hitch up some horses. That would be very cool. Plow the fields with horses. It's awesome. You don't need gas, you don't have to worry about all the gears and stuff on a tractor. (Vera, Apprentice)

The below farmer, former apprentice, has a more developed rationale for why she does not like tractors, but seems influenced by a values judgement also when she calls it a “diesel fuel crutch.”

Like why you use a broad fork... like I feel like the tractor is way more common. You think of farming you think of tractor. They go hand in hand. And I don't think it necessarily needs to be that way. And I feel like it just ends up kind of being a crutch in a lot of ways. An easy, diesel fuel crutch! (June, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

A two-wheel walk-behind tractor, however, was seen as acceptable. As in:

I think the big thing with us is like, do we really need a big tractor or can we really get the things all done with hand tools and a BCS? Because I think that we can and I think that the scale that we're interested in working with would work with just using a two wheel walk-behind tractor. (Flynn, Apprentice)

And the below apprentice also identifies more with a two-wheel walk-behind tractor:

So with the BCS I used it last year a couple times, just experimenting, but it's definitely much more my speed, which is good. (Faith, Apprentice)

The below farmer explained to me in depth his rationale for wanting a tractor. My field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] One good sized veggie plot with two tractors, riding mower (her dad's) and BCS with plenty of attachments – tractor provision is clearly overkill for this small plot, but [Farmer] knows that, and says he does that because he knows that when he gets old he will have to buy a tractor to keep

farming anyway, so why not buy it now so he can use it now? He also says it will help save his body.

And in the below, another farmer explains a tractor, again, to justify its use. He says:

The amount of work a tractor can do in a day is incredible. They really are incredible machines. You can accomplish a lot. Lots of energy get put into em and lots of work gets done. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

One document gathered at the local mediating organization conference had pictures of a two-wheel walk-behind tractor. The emphasis in the promotional materials disseminated at the conference accentuates the fact that the proprietors know that the appeal of the two-wheel tractor is the social positioning of the tractor, rather than solely functionality of the device. It says:

[DOCUMENT] FARMING WITH YOUR FEET ON THE EARTH... Join the millions who plow, till, mow, rake hay, bale hay, blow snow, haul, power sweep and much more with their FEET ON THE EARTH by owning a walk-behind tractor! [emphasis in original]

The need to justify the tractor shows where this tool is situated within the activity system.

Tractor use is seen as lower, less-than, and not as virtuous as using a walk-behind tractor. The below apprentice tries to justify tractors by saying they will be transformed by technology:

Well soon I bet there will be some solar powered stuff. It will look differently and act differently, but I bet – it's like small, like more like a bike size instead of a tractor size. By twenty years, I bet. (Vernon, Apprentice)

Thus, tractor use is seen as an important sociomaterial marker of the types of agriculture that are considered optimal within this activity system, although clearly, tractors are still used on some of the farms.

CHAT-Rules

CHAT analysis shifts focus to the rules, both tacit and reified, that govern behavior within the activity system. Special attention was paid to the rules that help to answer the research questions. These rules had to do with how AAM discourse produces and reproduces symbolic

aesthetic markers of belonging. Rules also supported a communitarian bent to daily activity and general ideals. I also observed that farming was treated as a lifestyle, which related to the rule that all must have a passion for farming – there was no place for begrudgingly completing farm work – apprentices and farmers alike had to enjoy the work. As part of negotiating neoliberal values, and in keeping with AAM discourse, consumer choice was seen as the main mechanism for social change.

Aesthetics, Food, and Coded Symbols

CHAT analysis focuses attention on tacit social norms within activity systems. With ethnographic methods to guide my observation, I interpreted that aesthetics were often important to practitioners within this system. Coded aesthetics of old-fashioned country items and food that marked membership and belonging here. Old-fashioned and nostalgic rural items were commonly seen. The below aesthetics demonstrate a typical aesthetic of old-fashioned “country.” As in:

Like I do paintings, like over there you can see my hen and my rooster painting, and I've got my barn quilt behind that that's going up. (Patricia, Apprentice)

As a symbolic marker of membership, many wore fashions that were symbolic representations of popular images of farmers. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [many had an] agrarian inspired look and clothing (boots with long flowy dress, high wasted shorts with high boots, tucked in shirt, “fancy” hair cuts)

The below musician showed the type of music that was often heard:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Musician was playing guitar [at farmers market] – they played old time music, old folk favorites, with a “quaint” touch. Gathered dollars in the guitar case. Encouraged kids to dance and do flat footing.

There were also aesthetics that were social cues of “counterculture.” My field note entries are below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Male farmer was wearing an Asheville Yoga shirt and Bob Marley visor, looking every bit the “former music festival type” gone corporate. The female farmer looked like a slim yoga instructor, long but fashionable skirt, woven straw hat, chaco sandals, sweet, serene smile, small nose ring.

There were fashions that I wrote in my field notes as aligning with the “hipster” aesthetic. My field note, below, details the fashion choices. It says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Many hipster-looking people, hipster hairstyles and clothing, slight twinge of steam punk. Hats. Skinny jeans. Tattoos. Piercings. Hair colors.

Fashion in clothing seemed to be important here. I also made field notes of other fashions:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Visitors to farmers market seem very “fashionable.” Also scarves, put-together-looking outfits... I saw one guy putting veg into an “adorable” wicker basket on the back of his bike.

The hippie aesthetic was also present as a coded symbol of belonging. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] there was a table with nice brochures and a hippie-looking tapestry-ish sheet as a table cloth.

The food within the activity system was an important marker of status, wealth, and privilege. A view of the food as an important part of identity emerged. Food, in particular what actors eat, marked boundaries of the activity system. Certain types of food were legitimized, and other types of food were scorned. The food that was observed on farms and at events had cultural markers of status, as in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Food all garden veggies and noodles or rice [at workshop].

The choice of microbrew beer to drink was also fairly consistent, even when there were other beers readily available. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Beer was mostly microbrew, but I saw some “regular” brands in cooler (Icehouse, Michelob), but no one was carrying them around to drink or carry around farm.

The below apprentice, a trained chef, shows her culinary distinction, when she says:

I only use my own knives, I know exactly which cuts to make, like my birds are always properly dressed.

At the same time, actors did have an awareness of the class markers behind the types of food present and legitimized.

I'm [quotes in haughty taughty voice] "expanding my food vocabulary" every day, and it's been amazing! Black bean burgers were another thing I was pretty excited about. And she said you can use any grains for that. You can use quinoa to bind it, or you could use millet, rice even, oats if you wanted to, and so I was just looking at her the entire time like wow I didn't know you could use oats in a savory dish. (Apprentice)

And the below apprentice adds:

To each their own, and as long as you're not being a snob about it, I've got no problem with people who try their damndest not to eat processed food. Like I try, not to eat processed food. (Apprentice)

In the below instance, a newcomer brought a Hormel[®] "Party Tray" from the grocery store, that had food (Ritz[®] crackers, cheese slices, pepperoni) that was conspicuously out of place. It was placed on a separate picnic table, away from the other food. One farmer commented on it, seeming to notice that it was exceptional to see it here, and offered a conciliatory word to the newcomer. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Aspiring farmer], Young single mom (white, 32 years old from [nearby town], tattoos and haircut shaved on one side, grew up on a farm), brought store-bought pepperoni and cheese crackers platter, which was a bit out of place... [Food is] usual fare. [One farmer] comments favorably on the Ritz crackers that [aspiring farmer] bought, because it is unusual to see them here but he's happy. [Aspiring farmer] says "keeping it simple"

Other comments made by actors seem to point out the type of food that is "outside" the activity system. As in:

I definitely was raised with no such thought of anything like that. I was raised on processed crazy food, like I was allowed to drink as much soda as I wanted, thanks for my teeth, guys! Yep, Pepsi, Doritos, Mountain Dew, and white bread, Ramen, hot dogs, and all that... we'd go through all the stuff that's typically devoid of nutrition. Like the white bread and the Ramen and the canned soup and all that, and then you end up with a pantry full of beans.

And Jack, a farmer, former apprentice, describes “outsider” food. He says:

We always thought it was kind of funny, her roommate... I just feel like they were always eating, like, ChikFilA, just like they're always working out and talking about the new diet thing, and it's like, you're drinking a Coca-Cola! (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

Heidi, in the below quote, seems very clear that Doritos and Mountain Dew are far outside the social norms at the apprentice workshop events, and she relates them to the culture of “America” (meaning mainstream United States). She says:

Part of me just wanted to bring a bag of Doritos, and see what kind of reaction I got. (laughs) ... [boyfriend] and I will do it, we're not scared! ... Doritos and Mountain Dew! (laughs) ... Right! 'merica! (said with accent) ...I really want to do it, dude! Just to see their faces! (Heidi, Apprentice)

She also recounts past experience at the farmers market, in which people were “snooty” when they encountered cheesecake, which was considered outside of what was expected at the farmers market. She seems to say that this food was othered, perceived as “less than,” or not good enough to be at the farmers market. She says:

Yeah like at the farmers market, too. It gets a little weird. I did farmers markets and I sold cheesecakes, three years ago, because my girlfriend was trying to start a small business, and so people would be all like, snooty about the fact that it was cheesecake, And it was just cheesecake, as opposed to the whole bakery section, like the other tents. And they were like, people didn't appreciate us being there. It was funny... They would ask if it had sugar in it, and then just leave. And I would tell them, yeah! But she would do one with just Stevia in them, just for those people. But some people would get it and just like, snicker, and it was funny. It was fun. People are strange. (Heidi, Apprentice)

The below apprentice is an ethnic minority, and during her apprenticeship experience, she sought ways to prepare food she thinks of as more healthy than her own family's foodways. She reflects that this food culture is for wealthy people. She says:

My aunt was the one that did all the shopping, she didn't mean any harm by what she put on the table it's simply what she could afford, so the solution comes down to having more money which would then mean you could afford to buy better foods, but if you're living in an area where there aren't supermarkets, I don't know it's like it's a compounded issue, where it's not only income accessibility but it's like physical accessibility in terms of the proximity to tailgate markets and whole food stores. Idk. Yeah I'm just thinking about my particular case, what would have made things better. Cuz if you say more money, I don't know that it would make things better. I'm going to try to piece it together. Cuz more money is part of the solution, but it's not enough, because there are culturally ways of preparing food as well that might not be the healthiest. So were you to have increased our food budget, we probably would have simply bought more meat, more rice, more starches, because it's not within the [country's] framework to make salads and to have blanched vegetables, so you'd have to introduce that conversation of changing diets as well, within poor communities. Um I don't know. This is my way of saying I have the ideal, but how we arrive at it I'm not so sure... Because most people I know who are doing well, who are eating well, they're uppity. They're well off, generally speaking. (Valerie, Apprentice)

The below apprentice associates her activity as apprentice to her diet. She says:

The health side of it is interesting to me, and how food can be medicine, and that's a really big thing that both of us are interested in, and love seeing that play into our daily work and health and how and where food comes from. (Vera, Apprentice)

Participants often discussed their relationship to meat eating. Many were various types of vegetarians, and all seemed to understand the need to approach meat eating through an ethical analysis. A theme emerged concerning the reification of the value on ethical consideration given to meat eating. My field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Book on ethical meat consumption by Meredith Leigh was given the spotlight at the workshop dinner.

Within the activity system, each participant had to negotiate their values about eating meat. As in:

I'm not really interested in any sort of raising animals for meat. I think I would want to learn more about non meat animals, like laying hens or raising sheep for wool [listing things "throwing things out there" tone of voice], or um different stuff like that I would be interested in, but I'm not really interested in learning about raising like beef, or anything. So that would be something. Um I don't know if there's much else. Mainly I was interested in veg, fruit, flowers. Oh the other thing I know. I really would like to know more about growing herbs, specifically medicinal herbs, We have a little bit of that, but it's not really a big thing here. I think that would be really cool to learn a lot about herb growing. (Grace, Apprentice)

And the below apprentice also addresses eating meat. She says:

Into agriculture, my path was going down the rabbit hole about, I think, the meat industry. Once I started really thinking about what I was eating, and I think it was in some book that they're like, don't look at the nutrition facts! I mean any time you have something and turn it over to look at the back, don't look at the nutrition facts, look at the ingredients. That's all you need to know. I think Pollan, actually said that right? Um, or no, it's another guy. (Vera, Apprentice)

So there were many markers of class, including the aesthetics of "old fashioned country" and countercultural fashion, the exclusivity of the food involved (described as "not processed junk"), and vegetarianism or ethical meat consumption.

Communitarian Ideals

As part of AAM discourse, many in the activity system expressed communitarian ideals.

The below event promotion from the local mediating organization expresses a value on building social ties and enhancing community. It says:

[DOCUMENT] At this point in the growing season, we are so looking forward to some relaxing time together as women in the field! Come with a potluck dish and positive energy and a willingness to share and enjoy each other's company in the busy-ness of farming and living. (women's event promotion)

Also, the below event promotion shows communitarian values, as they are associated with the food and farming within the activity system. It says:

[DOCUMENT] Eating local is about more than just food. It's about the relationship with the farmer, the connection to place and heritage, and the sense of community that comes from knowing firsthand where and how your food was produced. The [event name] is an opportunity to meet the faces of the local food system and feel more connected to where your food comes from. (event promotion)

The below was typical of the language used, when she says she values “reciprocity” and learning from elders in the community.

I think there's just something about, just making it more normal in our culture to like, value reciprocity, and just the community aspect of like, like I didn't really bring anything to the table coming here, you know, and I do learn a lot and expect to learn more, um, and like, but not necessarily have to like, go to a master gardener class or like, paying for it, getting a degree in agriculture, you know what I'm saying? Making it like a community-based learning experience is important to me, and like, something that I think, overall, like not just in farming or agriculture, but like, in general that should be something that society accepts, like learning from people in our communities who are older and wiser. (Patricia, Apprentice)

And the below apprentice discusses community. He says:

I think the local thing is important. Cuz of the sense of community that it can foster. I don't know like so much about environmentally, is the efficiencies of it. But you can build this beautiful community around local food, and people feeling that connection. And you know, supporting a business that's in your community. (Bridget, Educator)

Farming is a Lifestyle

One theme to emerge was the idea that farming is a lifestyle more than it is employment. So, if farming is an (ascetic) lifestyle choice, it is class-appropriate behavior for middle-to upper-class white, college-educated people. If farming is just employment, it is less appropriate to one's class background. For example, farming does not fit into class-appropriate practice of maintaining work-life balance. The below apprentice explains:

Yeah cuz it's your life. I think that is the biggest challenge is separating your work from your life, cuz a lot of people, they're the same thing. They don't get off the farm much cuz that's – the cows have to be milked at 7, chickens need to go up, someone needs to close the door, at 8, so we can't go get a beer, and that – that's definitely not the lifestyle for me! I mean, it works for some people, but, there are a lot of uncomfortable situations built into apprenticeships that I feel like you would never think of – I definitely didn't going into it. I had never thought, I was like, I know I'm not going to make any money for the next couple of months, but I know I'm at a farm, it's been like going back to school practically. (June, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

The below apprentice speaks of farming as a lifestyle when she talks about the need for one's romantic life to synthesize with farming. She says:

Yeah and the farm is an extension of your mindset of how life should work I think. When you're with somebody [a dating partner] who doesn't even understand that it's like, what's the point? (Grace, Apprentice)

The below third-year apprentice explains how people make the lifestyle choice but then the labor schedule is different than what they expected. He says:

I think a sad thing is that people get into sustainable agriculture I think, for the most part, because they're interested in this like, certain lifestyle where it's like, I don't know, a better lifestyle or something, like, it's not like more stress free, I don't know what the word is, it's like, they want it to be this like nicer way of living, but then like, the typical sustainable small farmer mentality is like, work work work yourself into the ground, until you're stressed out beyond belief, and hardly sleep and eat the same crap that other people eat, when you're growing like all this good stuff right outside, you're still forced to go buy crap and eat it because you don't have time to cook even though you want to so bad, you think the most important thing is work work work. (Flynn, Apprentice)

The below farmer educator, discusses how the labor is different than some anticipated at the outset of an apprenticeship:

So really understand if this is the type of work you want to be doing day after day. The impact on your quality of life, and for some people that improves their quality of life and that's really what they want, but you need to figure that out for yourself, cuz there's a lot of repetition and a lot of um, stress on your body and being really uncomfortable situations and stressful situations, and yeah, and it is a dangerous job! Isn't it one of the top five most dangerous jobs? (Bridget, Educator)

The below farmer makes a similar point:

I think there's a lot of idealism out there, and people think oh, I'm going to go work on this organic farm, and it's going to be this beautiful life, and you know, I'll be doing a good thing as I figure something else out, you know. And it's like a lot of fucking work! (Victor, Farmer)

Many repeated the theme that “you don’t get into farming for the money.” While there are practical reasons for this idea, it seems to combine well with the ideas that farming is less a job, more a lifestyle. As one farmer says of other farmers:

No one has a living wage! No one, almost. (June, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

The below farmer discusses the money of farming, and farming as different from a “real job.” He says:

Or be part time. I think part time – just the hourly wage of any job besides farming (laughingly) just seems so high compared to farming, and you think like, boy if you only worked like 10 or 15 hours a week at a real job, you could make almost equal to your farm salary! (Christoph, Farmer)

And the below apprentice states that money is not a “driving factor.” He states:

There's not as much money in it, which is the problem, obviously. So I guess you need to get, like most things, money can't be the driving factors behind it. Uh, feeding people, and preserving land needs to be the driving factor behind it. (Victor, Apprentice)

The local mediating organization has noticed that farming is often not treated as a career, and wants to promote farming “as a profession.”

I think a lot of farmers think you don't need training and you don't – they don't really see farming as a profession they're like, a lot of people these days come with a very romanticized ideal of what it is to farm, and they're disenchanted with the work and the lifestyle they've been leading, whether it's a corporate life or a restaurant life or whatever kind of work they're doing, and so they're really searching for meaning and they come to farming because they see that ability to work with their hands and create something tangible and cultivate something from the earth and then sell that product to their family and friends and community and there is a real meaning and real value to that, but that's not going to sustain you very long once you actually start farming, when you actually need money, because it's a lot of hard work! And you're running a small business and

a lot of people aren't prepared for that, and yeah, they think they can just get a piece of land and start farming and it's gonna be great! And so a lot of what we're trying to do is re-educate people about that, and sort of raise that professionalism up, in that it is a profession that requires training, just like being a plumber or an electrician or a nurse or a teacher, um, and we've lost a lot of our traditional training methods, which was, kids growing up on the farm or working in the summers. When you're on a full-on farm and having more of that organic transition of knowledge for the next generation. (Bridget, Educator)

At the same time, the local mediating organization is trying to help farmers find ways to make “two full time salaries” as farmers.

[We want to achieve] a vision where there's more farmers growing organically, but then also, growing, er, able to meet their income goals, whatever that goal is. So that could be full time, two full time salaries that they're able to make off of it, and pay for entrance and pay for their kids to go to college, and whatever those goals are for themselves, Or it could just be, like I just want to be able to make my land payments, or pay the taxes. I think, we're not trying to decide what that ought to be for anybody, but trying to enable people to decide and to know what their goals are, and have the tools and skills ad support to find a way to make a plan and meet those goals. So I guess a bigger picture would be a world where people um, where there's farms everywhere and people understand the value of organic and sustainable farming, and more people are choosing sustainable and organic farming and that food. And people are able to get the prices that it actually takes to raise that product or for that product. (Bridget, Educator)

Passion for Farming

One of the themes to emerge in the data was the general rule of conduct that you have to be passionate about farming in order to “make it.” As the below apprentice explains, there are many sacrifices one must makes, so “passion” is required. He says:

I think a big thing that helps you get into farming is that you have to realize that you're going to have to sacrifice a lot of stuff, and you're not going to have money to spend on things that you're used to spending money on, you're not going to have the time that you're used to spend with people, you have to realize that it's a big sacrifice, and you have to love it to keep doing it. It's not something that people are doing who don't love doing it, there aren't people who – well I guess there are! A lot of big farmers who are stuck in it, but like people like us getting started in this kind of small sustainable farming, is people that are passionate about it, and realize that they're going to sacrifice a lot to even scrape by in the beginning and they're doing it because they love it. You definitely have to like it and be passionate about it! (Flynn, Third Year Apprentice)

The below apprentice admires the farmers for what they do, although she does not identify potential for her own future. She says:

I don't know that an occupation could consume my life that much without my growing to hate it. But they love what they do! And I think the benefit of it is that their kids are growing up knowing, being able to identify foods, which isn't always a given. I like the idea of making everything yourself. Like it's just in their nature to make everything from scratch. Um, so that kind of philosophy I'll take with me. (Valerie, Apprentice)

The below farmer says “we love what we do,” but discusses farming also as “glorified torture” that “kicks your ass every day.” He explains his passion for farming:

We love what we do otherwise we wouldn't choose it. So you know, you choose this kind of like, glorified torture job, you know, and it kicks your ass every day, but that's part of the beauty of it, is that, you can fall asleep at night feeling like you did something great, you know, like you accomplished something super great. And you know, you're feeding people, you're eating well, yeah I don't know, I think it's, as most things are, I think it's related to everything else, so, obesity and health, and all that stuff. (Christoph, Farmer)

The below farmer explains that passion is a necessary part of who they employ as laborers, and they avoid the monetary aspect. She says:

We've only been around people who feel passionate about it. And we've never tried to hire somebody for money. (Fiona, Farmer)

Consumer Choice as Main Mechanism for Social Change

Many in the activity system repeated the strain in AAM discourse that consumer choice is the main mechanism for social change. They say, for example:

But I feel like if people were more educated about preparing their own foods. Like so many people do not know how to prepare vegetables. (Vera, Apprentice)

The below apprentice thinks “everyday consumers’ mind needs to be altered.” He says:

You have to convince people to care about the food enough to buy it to begin with. I think the image in the everyday consumers' mind needs to be altered so that they see a reason to buy tomatoes or lettuce or spinach from a farmer rather than

buying processed bread and peanut butter and jelly at a grocery store. (Faith, Apprentice)

The below document in a publicly disseminated article about the farmers market shows a reification of the going logic of consumer choice:

[DOCUMENT] The market is good for my own business because we can interact directly with our customers, and they can learn what goes into producing their food. (article about a new farmers market location)

The below farmer talks about the buying potential of consumers. She says:

Just going into Ingles (grocery store chain) and seeing all the people buying the lousy produce there and being like, if 1% of these people shifted to buying local produce, god, that would make such a difference (Fiona, Farmer)

The below apprentice thinks many should understand how food is grown. She says:

Yeah I feel like people who eat meat should understand processing and things like that. I think that's really important to know what goes into that, just like I think it's very important for me to know what goes into the growing of vegetables. And like, I've always eaten so many vegetables, and it's like I should learn how and where this comes from.

So, one of the social norms often repeated within the activity system is the conceptualization of consumer choice as a driver, which is seen as the biggest contributor to social change.

CHAT-Community

CHAT also allows us to see community, the composition of the community, and boundary markers of membership. I analyzed data in order to determine with whom the participants have a sense of belonging. In particular, those present on farms and at gatherings were those who cook and eat according to certain rules. Most in the activity system, with few exceptions, were young, white, educated, and from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, and urban or peri-urban. As mentioned above, all had varying layers of privilege. As one apprentice explains:

It was really exciting and as far as the people who came, they were exactly who I thought they would be. And I saw – and that means, eccentric people maybe. You know like, Asheville. Like hippies and young families with their barefoot kids, and just definitely, cool people. And a lot of people. (Vera, Apprentice)

Defining Boundaries of the Community

Many talked about others who ate certain foods, who were not seen as part of the community. As in:

I would see people come into the grocery store and have a shopping cart full of shelf stable packaged goods, and you know, boxes of sugary cereal that are \$2 and it's inexpensive and if you have like any sort of government help buying those things like, you have this amount of money where you can spend it on anything you want in the grocery store, and like there would be no produce in those carts. (Faith, Apprentice)

Low income people are not seen as part of the community. Notwithstanding that Medicaid does not pay for food, the below apprentice discusses the lack of access to farmers markets, which is occasionally referred to as the “tailgate” market, for underprivileged groups. As in:

I have worked with low income people, the food deserts. I mean they don't have good food. They're used to packaged foods. They don't cook much from scratch. They have processed food. And I mean that's normal, that's all they know. So um, having good food available at a reasonable prices so Medicaid and food stamps can pay for it. And I think that's possible. I know that's true at the tailgate. It's just that not a lot of low income people come to the tailgate. (Hyacinth, Apprentice)

Extension agents and others who are involved in “conventional” agriculture were not seen as a part of the community. The below farmer made a point about how it will be unusual for Extension agents to be involved in a farm tour, accentuating this point every time he mentioned the upcoming farm tour.

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Farmer noted several times today that there will be a farm tour “with Extension agents” to show off the new [post-harvest processing facility recently built on the property].

The below suggest the lack of participation in the local farming culture. Apprentices lack knowledge about a convenience store located on a prominent intersection that was visited by other farmers in the area. The store opens at 6:30am, is the only open establishment in the vicinity, and serves coffee, hot breakfast sandwiches, and finger foods, and has tables where farmers sit, eat, and chat. My frequent stops at this convenience store always yielded the same scene, leading me to believe this was part of a daily routine for many local farmers and workers as they drive to the fields. See the below field note entry:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Nearby [convenience store] is the place where farmers and others gather to buy their biscuits, energy drinks, and coffee, gather at tables, and chat before work. Many work trucks in parking lot. [The farmer] knew exactly where I was when I called her from there... none of the apprentices knew about [convenience store].

The community the below apprentice identifies with is distinguished from “monocrop agriculture.”

Like yeah all the other places I've lived and worked, even the last farm, that area, weren't as big as farming areas, were just this type of farming, were all like cornfields, like monocrop agriculture is just like, that's all there is around you, so there's not that same type of environment for lots of education and farm workshops and stuff like that. So I'm just excited to be in an area where that's a thing and that's emphasized and I have access to that kind of stuff. (Grace, Apprentice)

The below farmer distinguished himself as in “circles” where organic is the “clear choice.”

The immediate thing like you just said is organic. I know there are split opinions on that, not in the circles we run with though. But for me that is the clear choice. And I guess it definitely needs to change. And there are a lot of people who use the argument of how many people in the world are going to need to be fed, like the population is growing, but I guess I do hold a belief that just communities can grow more food for one another, which is probably not what any capitalistic free market person wants to hear, but I think that is my ideal. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

One farmer also mentions befriending conventional farmers. The fact that he must speak about it in these terms leads me to conclude that he does not see this as a common practice.

I think farmers have a responsibility to engage socially. Like that's our responsibility. Like we can't just say, I'm a farmer, I'm doing good. Like yeah we are doing good, but you also have to make an effort to like, even just small efforts to befriend your neighborhood conventional farmers because like, we're all in the agriculture game together, we all have the same value system it's just we use different products. You know, just maintaining – not getting overly dogmatic. (Christoph, Farmer)

One apprentice was a racial minority, and told me during her interview that she thought that not many of the other apprentices were talkative with her. Below is my field note entry:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] She said she really appreciated me coming, because before I came, no one was speaking to her. She said she looked forward to [days I came] because at least someone was speaking to her. (She was humble and shy saying this)... Why was no one speaking to her? Was it because she is different? A bit shy? ...polite ways instead of joking and raunchy?

Community Members “love food” as Gastronomics

It was virtually universal that members of the activity system expressed a “love of food,” by which they usually meant specifically, cooking and eating. It was not uncommon for actors to express that they had considered training as a chef. As in:

I have just a deep interest in food and all aspects of where it comes from and where it gets where it goes and how people eat it and how that sustains people and civilizations, but I just like food, and I love to cook, and I wanted to be a chef but I decided I'd rather be the actual source of the food rather than the pairing side, I don't know what you'd call it, but you know – just wanting to know more about food and how it happen and why it happens brought me to farming. (Melvin, Farmer)

Many thought of their practice as an apprentice as related to “eating healthy.” As in:

Well I went from eating out every night to not really eating out to making all my own food, eating organic, eating healthy, you know, working on my body, making

*my body as healthy as it can be, that way I can do what I need to do to be here.
(Patty, Apprentice)*

The below farmer expressed that he thought the food element of identity was a way to screen out those who did not belong in an apprenticeship. He says:

Something that I came to this year, actually, here's one of my criteria that I think going forward, a question, is to ask people, um, do you like to cook? Because if somebody doesn't like to cook, like this work, like they're not enjoying what they're doing. I mean that's what we're doing, we're growing food! You know, and if you don't enjoy cooking, then you're not going to enjoy caring for this food. (Victor, Farmer)

So it was a strong theme that those who were present in the activity system considered the gastronomical elements of what they were eating important to their practice as food producers.

Valorizing and Essentializing Farmers

Farmers, within the activity system, were often valorized to the point of being idolized as ideal types. Farmers are valorized far beyond others in the activity system. Many times farmers are essentialized to align with the markers of a more romanticized version of the farmer. For example:

Farmers are more hard working and they have that honest part of their soul that they can just connect with everything that's around them, you know? And observe, and see what's wrong in any situation. (Patricia, Apprentice)

One of the intersections with AAMs is the “know your farmer” strain in the conversation.

However, some are critical of this idea. The below farmer observed that it would be hard for the farmer to have relationships with all of their customers.

And really getting to know your farmer is something that we've talked about before, in the past too, cuz there are CSAs that – and this isn't to knock on any large CSA but, I think it would be really hard to know all your members in a CSA, that are supporting your farm, on a personal level. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

The need to perpetuate the “know your farmer” rhetoric has created a social space rather than a space to buy veggies.

Farmers markets are a totally different dynamic than they were three years go. People don't make the same money in markets, CSAs, it's all evolved. Farmers markets are now social areas, and people want prepared foods and all this stuff, where it used to be, that's where you went for your vegetables.

So the “know your farmer” strain in the AAM discourse has enabled the farmers markets to be perceived as social spaces, as this farmer relates, with the result of selling less farm product.

Another farmer also expressed that she did not necessarily want to have relationships with all of her customers. The field note is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] (Farmer) has previously said that she lowered the number of CSA members intentionally because it was just “too much.” She said the personal relationship with CSA members was draining.

So, paradoxically, this rhetoric has caused farmers markets to be less profitable for some of these farmers. The below farmer has noticed a similar phenomenon. He says:

We get a lot of support and compliments from our customers, and sometimes these customers will be gushing about us, and I'll be like, you bought like two times in the past two months. You're not really eating that much of our produce, and I'm glad you appreciate us, but like, could you translate that into something that could benefit our business and support our business more than words?

So as this farmer has gotten to know customers, even though they value the relationship, they feel that the customer is misunderstanding the arrangement that they should reciprocate by keeping the farm in business.

Apprentices as Temporary, Marginalized Parts of Community

Some apprentices have noticed that they were a marginalized part of the community. The below farmers, former apprentices, have noticed the difference in how other farmers treat them at

the farmers market. They say they feel they are seen as “minions” because the farmers think they are the apprentices rather than the farmers. They say:

[Other farmers at the farmers market think] that we're the apprentice. No other farmer has ever come up... but because we're potentially the apprentices there's no meet and greet, there's nothing, but it's interesting to me, because like, having been in [workshops] like two years, even though its like 4 and 5 yrs ago, I recognize all these people and I wonder if they recognize me, and it's just – now I just feel weird, and it's like this interesting... Yeah. Do they remember me? Am I just another minion? Like what is the like relationship here, and when will I ever be valid? Is it when I buy my own land? Is it just like that? Like what does it take? How many years do I have to like do the grunt work, you know? (June, Farmer, former apprentice)

And another apprentice says:

[It's] me feeling like not a part of the community. I'm sure it's not anyone's fault I just don't know how to be part of that community, because I'm not, like [farmers], I'm just here hanging out, and you know. And like I don't know how much I'm supposed to be, as a temporary apprentice. (Vernon, Apprentice)

So apprentices are marginalized members of the community.

CHAT-Division of Labor

The division of labor dimension of CHAT asks the question, “*who does what?*” in the activity to achieve the object(s)? Farmers are the decision makers and supervisors of farms.

Apprentices, as we see above, are responsible for most of the “grunt labor.” Farm employees are often present to perform specialized tasks and occasionally supervise apprentices. There are also others who are present (educators, customers, gardeners, and others who are interested in farming), who purchase farm products and help promote farms. One theme to emerge in the data was a persistent lack of careful planning for efficiency in labor on farms.

Having a Labor Schedule is Often Undervalued

The below farmer explains that the labor schedule is something that has not been discussed or planned out for beginning farmers. He thinks farmers need to plan out how much time each farm product is going to take, and when it will need work. He says:

A phrase that didn't come up in (workshop), that really is a good one, is a labor schedule. Can I do this with the amount of labor I have? Let's say I grow corn and cattle, and I feed the corn to the cattle and it's a great system but I need to make a little bit more money. I want to put more in retirement, or fix the barn, buy another piece of equipment, I need to add something out. Well maybe I could grow tulips, Hell my grandma grew tulips and I think I could grow tulips. Oh, tulips need a lot of work at the same time as calving is going on. How much time? Let me calculate... now I've got four acres in this main field, I can't plant it all, I can't harvest it all. It's like, so I need more labor. So but my FSA loan didn't go through in time. (Ross, Farmer)

The below farmer expresses how it's difficult to keep up the pace, and how he believes the demanding schedule precipitated his divorce. He explains:

The challenge to that is keep going! Keep going! I get tired throughout the day and you know, at first I'm like Ok I'm just gonna do this one row, and then I'm like, I'm gonna do to the first irrigation line, and then it's like, well maybe I'll do the next ten feet, all right, now, Ok I'm just going to do one plant, one weed at a time. And I just make it just as manageable as I can. OK, I can pull one more weed. I can pull one more weed!... And what else am I gonna do? Like go get a crappy corporate job? Nope I just gotta keep doing this! And so yeah another big challenge is, I did keep doing this, and eventually lost my partner. Whether it was because we weren't spending as much time together, or we were too stressed, or I was absent, cuz I was here in the field... we also had a newborn, and we also had just started a business, um, so I mean, I built 3 greenhouses in the first few months and I took one down and moved it over here and built it, and got the field plowed out and laid it out and had a good biz and started a couple hundred thousand plants, and transplanted em, and so she was doing a lot of the paperwork getting certified organic and that sort of thing. Yeah. Between like midnight and 4 am we were in the same bed. Yeah. I think that's a tough one. (Ross, Farmer)

The above story shows some of the unfortunate implications of not planning a labor schedule, rather than simply viewing farming as a lifestyle.

Labor Schedule, Productivist Values

Many apprentices realize that there is a plan to the farming, which was something they reported not realizing at the outset of the apprenticeship. This shows that there were preconceived notions about the farming that lacked a careful plan to the labor. The below apprentice says:

It's not just like oh why don't we go weed today? Or like, oh, we could go harvest beans. [flippant tone of voice] It's like [serious tone] OK so we harvested the beans this day so we won't harvest them again until this day, so this is going to be done in the morning so it's cooler, and this is done in the afternoon when it's hotter, and like these things have to be done on this day and we have to get this stuff done by this time. It's all structured. It all feels to me like it's structured so well here. It's making me realize how much like, big picture thought goes into like planning the work week, planning the work day, and also just planning the entire season. Which is really interesting. (Grace, Apprentice)

The below apprentice remarks with emphasis that the work is hard. She discusses the long hours on many farms and hiring Latinos. She says:

It's hard work and long hours! I mean they can't get Americans to do it, so they have to hire Latinos. I couldn't last twelve hours doing that! (Hyacinth, Apprentice)

One of the farmers who hosted a workshop discusses hiring Latinos, which draws interest, since it is regarded as unusual. This farmer was more comfortable than most in his productivist values, while remaining a small, locally marketing, organic farm. His description provided an interesting juxtaposition to the labor schedule predicaments on farms that rely on apprentices for labor. (I also noted structures present for farmworkers: clean water in an outdoor mess sink, several

portajohns, and picnic tables under a tin roof, in a shady area along a creek). Below is my field note:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [During farm visit, farmer said that] One of the years, turn-around for employees was bad. “to employ 8 people each day, I think I turned in 50 W-2s to the government that year.” He said it’s gotten better as someone at [small organic distributor] referred an out-of-work Latino man one time to the farm, and that guy knew all the Latinos in the area who wanted farm work, and now he helps recruit workers.

So the agrarian dream of the small farm seems to create a need for a sophisticated labor schedule, with varying responses to the need.

Labor Schedule is More Important on Diverse Farms

Farmers talked about how the diversified farm needs a strategic approach to labor and planning to be viable. One farmer explains that the niche products and diversity of products necessitates more hand labor, and hints at the level of sophistication that is required in order to plan a labor schedule on a diverse farm. He says:

You know, we’re growing 100 different varieties of vegetables and uh, you know, we’re marketing stuff that are you know, people can’t get other places because of how inherently inefficient it is. Like what we’re doing right now with these beets [pulling greens off by hand, arranging carefully], you know, we’re not selling large stuff, like our squash is all fancy, which means we gotta be careful when we pick it, which means it can’t get dirty, and you can’t run it through the washer, because you’ll scratch the skin, and that kind of thing, I mean we’re filling this niche, you know, and in doing that, um, there’s not a lot of equipment for these kind of boutique vegetables. (Victor, Farmer)

And the below farmer explains how many small farms (who do not spray) have weed pressure, but the schedule can be planned to minimize hand weeding. He says:

Maybe that’s part of why it has gotten so disconnected, but I feel like there’s gotta be ways to cut back on hand-weeding, that you could do, you know. There’s gotta be better ways you can plan your crop schedule and your crop rotation to help remove the weeds or have less weed pressure. (Jack, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

And June makes a similar point:

Yeah just like, get to weeds a little bit earlier, so you don't have to hand weed. Like just the way every day planning was done, like if we would do this just a little sooner then it would be way less intense than putting it off for something else. Like priorities, basically. (June, Farmer, Former Apprentice)

I observed that the work schedule was often long hours. The schedule was also critiqued in one conversation I observed among apprentices from different farms, at one of the workshops. My field note entry is as follows:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] One female apprentice said "there has to be a quitting time" after [Apprentice] told his story about working on memorial day and how they worked 7-5pm that day, then [farmer] showed up at 5pm so they kept working a few more hours.

One farmer was particularly keen to express how labor processes had to be efficient on the farm.

There were many occasions where he would demonstrate the most efficient way to do a task quickly. As in:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] breaks from the cukes to go prep the bed for beet transplants. After we're done with cukes, we transplant the beets. [Farmer] shows me how to safely remove the plants form the trays, and he understands when I can't get a few out correctly, says "don't worry, just toss it!". [Farmer] shows both [Apprentice] and me how to plant the beets more efficiently, saying "it doesn't have to be perfect, I just jam it in like this." I heard him show [Apprentice], then [Apprentice] said something, and [Farmer] said yeah I saw you make the hole, but here's how I do it." [Farmer]'s technique saves a lot of time.

And the below farm employee mentions a workshop where beginning farmers were planning on taking vacations. She was saying that did not sound realistic. The field note entry is below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farm Employee] says that the [beginning farmer workshop] was just a lot of envisioning that actually didn't result in a very realistic plan. "You can say you're going to get \$75,000 a year and that you will

take vacations, but the reality is that you can't do that," she says. She says there was "a whole lot of dreaming" without it resulting in much.

Overall, the CHAT analysis made plain the need for more explicit, intentional planning efforts of surrounding labor on many of the farms.

CHAT-Outcome

While an accurate determination of long-term outcomes was outside the scope of this study, CHAT analysis is an aid in pulling together evidence to give a "best guess" estimation of what outcomes might be. The data allows us to see what participants perceive to be the projected future outcome of the activity, which this section reports. Virtually all participants held some version of an oppositional stance to the dominant received culture. This was often in relation to the food system, but it bled into other areas, as well. The below apprentice envisions a world where local food systems are more important. He says:

If we all became farmers – not everyone, it's not all or nothing, but if there were more farmers markets than grocery stores, I think if food didn't have to travel so far, I don't know I think we could make a dent. (Vera, Apprentice)

Also, farmers were not always convinced that they themselves would continue farming for the rest of their lives, but are trying to make a positive social impact. As in:

Well I have no insane delusions that I'll always just be a market farmer, but the best I can do it, like, grow good kids, teach them good values, pass on a piece of land for them to use if they like, and um, trying to educate as many people in a quiet manner on just, what we do, and you know, show as many people, get it out there. (Christoph, Farmer)

Outcome: Communitarian, Naturalistic Way of Life

As consistent with AAM discourse, a consistent theme within the data was that the desired outcome for a paradigm shift away from our dominant food system and toward a more localized, 'organic,' and 'sustainable' food system. The negotiation of productivist ideals seems

to express itself as commitment to living outside of the dominant food system, and shows a commitment to oppositional identities. The fact that these envisioned futures are seen in terms of holistic and self-sufficient shows an underlying desire to be outside the hegemonic systems of production. Grace expresses that “organic” and “sustainable” farming is “the way forward.” She says:

That’s so tangible and that’s so important and necessary for the world, and that organic and sustainable agriculture is kind of like the way forward in the world right now and not more factory farming and pesticides and destroying the earth. (Grace, Apprentice)

And, similarly, Hyacinth refers to an intended outcome with the summation “and all that kind of stuff,” which shows a holistic approach. She says:

Also, education would be a part of it, to teach people why that’s important. And it’s not just for your own body’s health, but it’s for the food system, and sustainable agriculture, and the bees, and all that kind of stuff. (Hyacinth, Apprentice)

Hank talks about the future desired outcome involving “everybody,” which also shows a holistic approach. He says:

100 yrs ago, nearly everyone was a farmer or gardener. Then oil arrived and changed all that, so farming became a specialization. If you pull out oil, we’re all going to need to be farmers again. So from inner city flower box farm to large gardens, just everyone will be participating in some way. So that’s a model I like, is just the idea that it’s the freshest, cleanest, most healthful food, and so, everybody should get it from their back yard if they can, if that’s not practical for some reason, a local farmer. (Hank, Farmer)

As part of a natural way of life, many actors within the system envisioned their future as one of self-sufficiency in a homesteading scenario. They often appeared to value homesteading and self-sufficiency over being committed to farming for a career/livelihood. Grace explains her

optimal future as one where she is “self-sufficient” and spends her “whole life in nature,” which shows an envisioned future lifestyle outside the dominant food system. She says:

[I envision] my own farm, working my own land, just being simple. Yeah. Self sufficient. Spending my whole life in nature, being happy, just enjoying what I do. (Grace, Apprentice)

Heidi sees her future as a homesteader, saying she would rather “not have to go to the store,” which demonstrates a rejection of hegemonic forms of production. She says:

Yeah my ideal farm would be me homesteading at home, and not have to go to the store, because I'm working at home homesteading, and providing for myself in that way. I'd probably have goats and chickens that I would eat, and then, all kinds of weird stuff to pickle, throughout the year, and then all of my good summer stuff. (Heidi, Apprentice)

And Flynn, below, also explains how homesteading and self-sufficiency is a “big driving force” for him, showing a rejection of hegemonic norms of food production. He says:

I think one of the reason we want to work on a farm was whether we have a business 20 years from now or not, we want to be able to sustain ourselves and whatever family we have if our food system collapses. We want to be as self-sufficient as possible. So that's a big driving force, If we didn't have a business we would go off and have a homestead and support ourselves in a heartbeat. (Flynn, 3rd Year Apprentice)

Reproduction of Farm Models with Varying Potentials for Commercial Success

There were many who questioned the financial sustainability of the farm models upon which the apprentices worked. The below farmer questions the nature of some of the information put forward on one of the farms who hosted a farm workshop. He says:

I mean, some of these workshops, like a pastured pork operation, you know, it's like, let's talk numbers on that, you know? Don't just tell me how great this is and how great the pork tastes. It's like man, somebody might go out there and try to support themselves using this mode! So that's what I like, I want to hear people talk about the reality of that stuff. Otherwise it's like, it's just a carnival ride. (Victor, Farmer)

So the above farmer questions the potential for commercial success of farm models put forth as examples in “some of these workshops,” and points out that the example might be reproduced..

The below farmer wants to put forward her farm as a model to demonstrate farming to the public and others, although this farm draws a large amount of its income from off the farm and includes agritourism enterprises (hosting weddings, farm stays, etc.). She says:

I think we'll be an amazing model for what a sustainable farm looks like. We just planted blueberry bushes last fall. We have a bee garden, we have a pollinator garden. We're going to be a great example of how to live sustainably. Um, I don't know if that's answering your question. We aim to be a really great example.
(Paula, Farmer)

One farmer laments that he feels that his farm has to “fly under the radar” in their strategy of using apprenticeship to meet their labor needs.

I don't think there's really another way to learn market farming, And it's too bad that in our society it's not like celebrated. Like it feels like we're all trying to fly under the radar. Like the work trade system. (Frank, Farmer)

One often repeated theme was the idea that even if apprentices did not continue as beginning farmers within the food system, they would still be better informed as consumers or food system workers (at nonprofits, etc.) after their apprenticeship experience. As the below farmer states:

I don't see them [the apprentices] – I see them all like being very involved in like, the responsible sustainable food movement. Um, whether or not they run their own farm, I don't know that. And I don't think they know that, I don't think that they're like, yeah. But I think that it's like, working here is going to continue to translate in their lives, with an understanding of food production, and small scale agriculture. (Vincent, Farmer).

And the below farmer makes a similar point:

They leave having learned the realities of farming, according to what we do but also like kind of like the experience of marketing and growing and caring for, and

the philosophy of the farming we do here that, you know, carrying on a realistic concept of what it takes to produce food and kind of like a broader meaning of why we do what we do. (Hank, Farmer)

Some farmers and apprentices openly questioned whether “the apprenticeship model” was a viable model. I recorded the below exchange in my field notes, where two apprentices questioned if the farm would be viable without apprentices. See below:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] One apprentice says: “would this be sustainable?” another finishes, “without apprentices”?

In the below quote, a farmer who was a former apprentice describes being critical of the model of the farm she worked on and reading about alternatives. She says:

I kept reading. Like when things were bad, I was devouring books, and like, “it can be different! This is not the only way!” (June, Farmer)

Additionally, some apprentices were open about the fact that they have learned that they would not want to be farmers. One apprentice said she doesn’t know if she could be a farmer:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] apprentice says: I would love to do farming but it is a whole lot of work. I’m not sure I could have that responsibility.

The below apprentice thinks that she’s “not tough enough,” possibly because she was on a farm where the symbolic forms of agrarianism of rugged individualism, bravery, and toughness was strongly displayed (black widows were found, but not killed, a snake visited her bedroom and was treated as a pet, etc.). She says:

Because I’ve learned I’m not cut out for this sort of work (laughs). It’s just hard, like physically. And I would have to apprentice for perhaps 2 or 3 more years before I felt like I was knowledgeable enough. Yeah. This is my second summer on a farm, and yeah, I just don’t know enough. . And whether I could fit that into getting a masters, also apprenticing, so I could be ready to take on the family inheritance and farm the land, I don’t know it just seems like a really daunting project. I don’t think I have the time to invest in that right now. And I’ve learned to, I think I respect farmers more than any other working group. It’s just, god, if you didn’t have machines to do all this work, I don’t know how you’d do it. The fact that [the two farmers], that they don’t walk out on us, any random given day,

is just phenomenal to me. But I think the mission of diversified farming, it means so much to them that they stick through it. I respect them but I couldn't be them. (laughs) I just. I'm not tough enough. (Valerie, Apprentice)

So in analyzing outcomes of the activity system, it becomes plain that some are questioning the long-term viability of the apprenticeship model, and some apprentices become disillusioned about farming as a result of their experience.

Questions of Gender and Precarity

One of the farmers asked me repeatedly to explain (as a University scholar of food and agriculture) why so many of the apprentices were women. Women represented a sizable number of those within the activity system, as apprentices, farmers, educators, and others. Many are aware of how their gender influences their practice. I commonly made the below field note:

[FIELD NOTE] Even female-male ratio.

The below farmer discusses her preference for female apprentices based on gendered social dynamics. She identifies that the submissiveness that an apprentice embodies is normally a desirable trait for an apprentice.

[FIELD NOTE] Paula has a strong preference for female apprentices, saying males have challenged her authority and her decisions, and "try to run the farm."

One of the farm tours on an atypically larger farm talks about the labor force, who are all men, calling them "the guys." One woman [a gardener, older white woman] shows her challenge to the idea that the farm appears to be a male-dominated operation. The male farmer seems to understand her cause for concern. My field note is as follows:

Farmer calls them [the farmworkers] "the guys." One woman asks "what, so, no women?", smiling defiantly. and he says no with a knowing-tinge-of-guilt grin, "nope. They're all guys."

The below apprentice seems to see that being a female farmer is becoming more popular. She says:

I'm just always interested in where the world is headed, because it's becoming trendy to be a farmer, gardener whatever. It's like, it's not just old men anymore! (laughs) It's changing and I'm just very interested in how it's going to look. (Patricia, Apprentice)

Many of the actors seemed to embody feminine ethics of care. They were often focused on the food, and lunch was therefore an activity where food was shared and made a central part of the exchange. The below field note of lunch with a female apprentice is typical:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] She cooked her lunch and I gave her some of mine. She says she values reciprocity, and stated she likes to "share food and feed people."

Another interesting observation was that many of the apprentices did not have a plan on where they would head next. It struck me that this was a situation of precarious employment that women more often find themselves in, and I wondered whether this precarity partially explained why there are many female apprentices. The below female apprentice answered the question "where are you headed after the season is over?" She says:

You know, just find something to do, until March. Um, which for me, that would probably be, get my yoga teacher training, so that I can always fall back on that. But there's so many. I think I guess I still have four months here and I think I'll start – I can't really think too far ahead. And I've just never been that way. (Vera, Apprentice)

So, these findings related to gender, while not central to the research questions of this study, open fodder for discussion, and introduce avenues for future research.

The Exception: A different on-farm apprenticeship model

One farm had a different model from others in the study, which added some valuable perspective to the analysis of on-farm apprenticeship, although as a case study, this farm cannot be compared directly to the others. This farm paid an hourly wage (about a dollar below minimum wage), and apprentices did not live on the farm. Apprentices worked only 9am to 4pm, two days a week, plus working the farmers market. The farmer explains that he does this, in part,

because he questions typical apprenticeship arrangements. He also questions the sustainability of the apprenticeship model as it is on most farms. As he explains:

So how many farms across the country can attract a college educated work force and pay them \$3/hr, I mean is that a model for the future? So we're paying \$6 to \$7 an hour, which isn't that much better than \$3/hr, but at least it's for each hour. So it's not 12 hour days and it's not 6 days a week, and so, our model clearly needs some work but I think it's closer to something that could be an example to other farms. So we're an organic farm, and that's sort of in vogue, and that would attract people who – I mean, if I'm just raising corn and soybeans, you know, who's going to sleep in the barn and work 12 hour days for \$3 an hour? So that's what I mean when I say it's not as sustainable of a model? I think the people that are using the internship model, I don't question them. I don't condemn that approach, because they're all pioneers. They're paving the road for the future, and if they're gonna make a living on the farm, they have to figure out a way to make the economic ends meet, and if that helps in that, I mean, you're a pioneer, so cutting some corners makes sense to me. So it didn't seem quite right to me, but other people who do use that model, I don't question that. (Hank, Farmer)

The farmer also explains that they treat apprentices more as farm workers by paying an hourly wage. He again says he questions the sustainability of the typical apprenticeship arrangement:

We look at our helpers as workers. So they're farmworkers. And part of the compensation is education, but we look at it as a real job. We pay for each hour of work, and part of it is that, I'm not sure how sustainable the apprentice monthly stipend model really is. In other words, not every farmer can do that. And so we don't pay a huge wage, but at least we pay an hourly wage. So if we were to scale up and get some flatter land and get more efficient presumably, we could scale up to wage, to go with that. But so, in a way, I think working 12 hour days for a \$400/mo stipend plus room and board, sleeping in a barn, and that sort of thing is, um, only marginally sustainable. So, sorry to get into that rant but, we see apprentices as workers and we try to deal with them on that basis. We expect them to deal with the work in that way, also. (Hank, Farmer)

The farmer was very congenial with apprentices, and I did not notice a single instance of negative emotion, or even impatience. My field note says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] General feeling of a family type setting, intimate, personal, farmer knows all sorts of details about people and treats employees with respect and dignity

And the below field note entry:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] went around table and made sure everyone was adequately introduced – giving details of each person (shows he pays attention)

Additionally, education objectives were often prioritized over work objectives. At least one hour a day was devoted to purely educational activities, much like one would experience as part of a class or workshop. The below examples show:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [Farmer] ran over the irrigation hose with the bush hog, set to repairing the hose, but pulled everyone in for a 25-30-minute lesson/discussion on irrigation lines, standing comfortably in the shade. He didn't need anyone to help, just thought we'd be interested.

And in the below example, the farmer (Hank) stops work to explain a task to me, which was a common practice on this farm. My field note entry says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Hank took five minutes to explain to me how the seeder worked, even though he did not need me to operate the seeder. At first I was confused because I thought he was explaining it to me because he wanted me to then use the seeder to seed several 100' rows he had, but he didn't – he did that himself.

The farmer began each day with a 30-minute educational session around his kitchen table, where apprentices were welcomed to bring their breakfast to eat. This morning session was included in the tally of hours for the day, for which apprentices were paid. My field note entry is as follows:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Morning session consisted of discussion over the catalogue in the middle of the table, including farming equipment ([farmer points out it has a] “full line of Carharts, 20 pages of boots, you name it.”). All seemed genuinely interested in the 5-10-minute discussion over boots.

The below apprentice discusses the morning sessions around the breakfast table, in which a planned lesson of some nature transpires on a given subject pertaining to recent farm activities.

He says:

Usually whatever we're working on he'll break it down, we're always doing different stuff. So I mean he went over plumbing with us, he went over electric

with us. Sometimes he'll sit down with us at the morning at the table, he'll go over, he'll have the plumbing parts and the PVC and how it goes together. The electric outlet boxes and stuff like that. (Hector, Apprentice)

And as the below apprentice points out, the farmer even stops farm work when the team is “falling behind” in order to conduct formalized educational activities. She says:

Obviously, hard labor is a big part of this, but you can tell that Hank is so geared towards actually teaching. Like he is so very passionate about it, and so kindhearted about it, and even in times when we're falling behind, he doesn't hesitate to stop, take the time to explain something. That's my favorite part about it, once again, is just working for the best people you could ever meet! (Helen, Apprentice)

And the farmer takes “every opportunity” to conduct educational activities, as the below apprentice explains:

Just working in the environment that we're in, working with the other workers, and working with [farmers] and the fact that he takes every opportunity he can to teach us something. Every time there's an opportunity, stop, come, watch, look, do you want to do this for yourself? Just that view he has on this. That's really awesome. (Apprentice)

On this farm, I also noticed empowerment of apprentices much in the same way one might see at any work site, in order to make everyday decisions to do the work. At this farm, it was common to observe:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] Helen [Apprentice, says]: “I don't think we should overpick this area because we should leave some for next week.”

In my view, this empowerment is potentially related to the legitimacy of being a similar structure to minimum wage shift work, in which one is viewing oneself as a professionalized and legitimized employee and able to make these types of decisions, as Torlina (2011) describes. This sort of identification seemed comfortably accessible on this farm. Another example of this identification can be seen in the statement of the below apprentice, who also worked part time as a nurse, describing her position to that of “laborer.” She says:

Hank teaches you so much, and it's manual labor, I mean. I mean, I know a lot more this year than I did last year because I was new last year, so I've done it before. But still, it's not that hard. But that's just because I'm a laborer... I just do what I'm told! (Hyacinth, Apprentice)

The farmer (Hank) also explains that apprentices on his farm typically have a “second job,” and apprenticing on his farm is their “fun job.” This suggests that apprentices on his farm do view the apprenticeship as equivalent to shift jobs. He says his crew are “good natured about the hard work,” which suggests that manual labor identities are accessible to apprentices. He says:

Compared to most farms, we're in a unique situation being this close to Asheville. So you can work in Asheville with a job to pay the rent, and this becomes more the fun job, so it really has worked out. We've had really great crews the past few years. I think this is a great group. You know, everybody has their idiosyncrasies, as do I (laughs) but everyone seems kind and respectful of each other, and good natured about the hard work, and sharing the bad stuff as well as the fun stuff that needs to go on, so. And so that's been typical. (Hank, Farmer)

This type of empowerment in the workplace is often expressed in the form of actual complaining, of the type heard often at many different manual labor worksites. This ran counter to the observed asceticism on other farms, in which a “suck it up” attitude was prevalent and very little open complaining took place. One example is the below apprentices discussing typical worksite complaints of heat, bending over, and factoring in work schedules:

Oh man, so I think we had an hour and half long bitchfest about this today, but planting lettuce is my least favorite part. It's being bent over for a long period of time, on a really narrow walkway, on like, the surface of the sun, while watching these poor plants that like immediately start wilting and die because we're planting in the heat of the day which is terrible is our only option. And then understand that unless we want to have some crazy schedules, that's our only option, so we gotta do what we've gotta do... And it's just like terrible. It's such a bind cuz everything is so narrow. (Helen, Apprentice)

And in the below instance, apprentices were even able to change the course of the workday through their collective complaining, much as one would see at any worksite. My field note says:

[FIELD NOTE ENTRY] [After farmer explained we would go into high tunnel] General disapproval (audible groans) about working in high tunnel in heat of day, so Hank (farmer) does not push that and says OK, only if overcast.

In another example, the below apprentice is open about her negative feelings about the squash plants in the interview, which aligns with her expressions of open dissatisfaction I observed while she is working, as well. She says:

The squash gets old after a while. The big patches it's like heh heh heh (sound to say: this is somewhat unpleasant), three, four weeks in it's like, I'm so tired of you! It's like, we pulled up all the squash today in the greenhouse. We're finally done! (Heidi, Apprentice)

Again, the complaining is noteworthy because it runs counter to the lack of complaint heard on other farms. Workplace culture might develop for a number of reasons including sheer lucky chance combination of personalities and social dynamics. However, I am left with the impression that the structure of apprenticeship at this farm, which somewhat mimics minimum wage work, does not precipitate a mindset of asceticism, since the schedule and pay are as reasonable as any minimum wage, manual labor job. Apprentices did shiftwork at other jobs concurrently that season, and some of the apprentices were not from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds.

In terms of the labor schedule, the primary farmer (Hank) is a retired engineer, and overall mindful of keeping the farm system efficient. He says of himself and his partner, describing their labor schedule before he retired:

We both had full time jobs, and we were also the entire workforce for the farm, so um, it was, the farm crew was a way to relieve that stress, so, even today there are things I do when you all aren't here, and pretty much I'm working side by side, but you all [the apprentices] are extending my labor. Allowing me to do more of what I would be doing if I were doing it by myself. So long as I can keep that efficient, be well prepared when you all arrive, then the economics work out. In other words, we can provide jobs, and education, and food, in terms of compensation, but also make enough money to cover that, plus a little more to make it all worthwhile. (Hank, Farmer)

The farmer ruminates on who might continue farming after the apprenticeship experience:

We ideally hire people that want to be farmers, but it's – [Hector], I think, will do agriculture in some form. Yeah I think he's pretty, seems pretty dedicated to it. And I think everybody else is more homesteading, small scale. (Hank, Farmer)

So to the extent that “the exception proves the rule,” this farm, with its different structure for apprenticeship, lacked the elements of asceticism and toughness seen on other farms. It also had a few apprentices present who were not from a socioeconomically privileged background.

Findings Summary

The findings in this study are representative of only this ethnographic case study, and were integrated during data analysis for meanings derived from all three datasets. Thus, this summary presents a synthesis of all data in the study. Here, I present a synopsis of all findings.

Analysis highlighted that on-farm apprenticeship actors within this activity system are predominantly white and middle- to upper-class. With few exceptions, status markers of levels of privilege were inadvertently applied to indicate belonging with the activity system. As members of an oppositional social movement (AAM), actors are socially performing and negotiating oppositional identities that seek to defy, resist, and change the dominant food system and mainstream consumerist culture, writ large. They hold noncapitalist values, and yet are forced to confront and negotiate agricultural productivism in order for farms to stay financially viable. This negotiation often produces a cognitive dissonance that is difficult to reconcile.

Additionally, as members of a social movement, actors hold values of voluntary simplicity, embodying ‘asceticism of the wealthy.’ This can then articulate into the material realities of not having a toilet, or not having enough food to eat. Due to the actors’ inexperience and symbolic, romanticized interpretations of agrarianism, they often embrace “suck it up” attitudes and behaviors that bear markings of agrarian ideals of rugged individualism, bravery,

and manliness. In part, because many apprentices (and other actors) lack much prior experience in manual labor trades, these ideals are then negotiated within new manual labor identities, constructed socially by these actors. I observed that, often, the work of apprentices was not as efficient towards accomplishing the immediate physical tasks for the day.

Manual labor identities are further mediated by alternative agrifood discourse. Actors often emphasized the “healthy” and “clean” aspects of the food being produced, and the bodily health of the farm work as exercise towards a “clean” and “healthy” lifestyle, as opposed to identifying in solidarity with wage laborers who work on “large” or “different” farms. In this way, the stigma of performing a dirty job is recast as a class-appropriate activity.

There were three objects of the activity: beginning farmer training; inexpensive labor for small, diversified farms; and to have an authentic, “meaningful” lifestyle experience. The conflict between these objects led to cognitive dissonance of apprentices, and even cognitive dissonance of many of the farmers.

CHAT analysis underscored the importance of the sociomaterial within this activity system, to demonstrate that material objects exert a force on activity simply by their presence and how they are engaged. One important finding shows that hand labor involved long exposure to dirt, prickly and itchy plants, insects/spiders, physical pain and discomfort, bent backs, stooping, isolation, heat, sun, and sweat. These factors must be considered when attempting to theorize why actors do what they do within the activity system. Tools were often inadequate in order to work efficiently (by which I precluded any expensive tools). For example, makeshift potting benches without an aisle to walk through that requires climbing on rafters to access, or use of 17-gallon rope handled plastic tubs while the wheelbarrow sits in the tool shed, or hand-pulling weeds while stirrup hoes sit in tool shed. Additionally, the tractor was used as a boundary

object, which was a frequent object of disavowal or justification as a rehearsal of alternative agrifood discourse.

There were many rules upheld within the activity system. Social markers of status and wealth were upheld within the activity system. For example, certain types of food were legitimized (which had cultural markers of status), and other types of food were scorned. One of the most often reified rules was that all apprenticeship activity is primarily for the purposes of education. Consumer education and choice are seen as the main mechanism for change, despite communitarian ideals. An important rule to be upheld was that farming is a lifestyle (as opposed to a job), and that those who enter it as a profession have to be passionate and love it.

The community for this activity system appears to be dominated by young, white, educated, and from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, and urban or peri-urban. There were exceptions, but their experienced appeared somewhat marginalized. Community members have to generally profess a love of “food” (as opposed to agriculture, the environment, etc.). Farmers are valued as the most important members of the community, if essentialized, and misunderstood. Apprentices, by contrast, are seen as the least important members of the community.

CHAT Analysis of the division of labor reveals that apprentices exist to do manual labor. The symbolic agrarianism present in the discourse leads to low emphasis on labor efficiency. Productivist mindsets are tenuously adhered to, with cognitive dissonance as a result.

Outcomes of the activity system are difficult to determine, since these exist in the future. Very few apprentices, toward the end of the data collection period, appeared committed to continuing farming, and often explained their other plans that did not include farming. However,

one outcome seems to be the social reproduction of inefficient and therefore less viable, model for a small, diversified farm.

As a note for future research, my findings also contain interesting gendered expressions of precarity in apprenticeship experiences, which beg deeper questions about feminine spaces in alternative agrifood and in small, diversified farming systems. I also note that one of the farms in my study had a different model, one that paid a wage and did not house apprentices on the farm. As a result, these apprentices appeared to treat the farm work more as a job rather than a lifestyle, and acted as many would in manual labor jobs. While apprentices still considered themselves members of the alternative agrifood movement, I did not notice equivalent strains of asceticism.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the objects of on-farm apprenticeship activity, and three main threads of implications for on-farm apprenticeship of the findings of this study: (1) how inequity may be (re)produced through socioperformative identification processes involving race and class, (2) the ways in which tensions between productivism and noncapitalistic communitarianism are creating a third, noncapitalistic space, and (3) how sociomaterialist constructivism in the CHAT analysis has been generative theoretically. After discussing the significance of the study, I provide recommendations for theory, practice, future research, and address limitations of the research.

To remind the reader, this dissertation research has addressed the following questions:

1. What mediating sociomaterial tools and artifacts inform on-farm apprenticeship learning within this activity system?
2. How is farm labor regarded and experienced within the activity system?
3. How does AAM discourse and technique articulate into sociomaterial outcomes in this activity system?
4. What are the social, cultural, and political implications of cognitive praxis and identification processes within this on-farm apprenticeship activity system?

The findings from this research describe on-farm apprenticeship activity as performative and contextual within a social movement, where class-appropriate identification processes are played out and negotiated within a field (as per Habermas, 1984; Bourdieu, 1984). The objects of activity are multiple, which leads to cognitive dissonance within the activity system, and has repercussions for the production and reproduction for the small, diversified, and direct marketing

farms upon which apprentices work. Romanticized, symbolized versions of farmer identity and farming, along with sociomaterial realities of work, leads to identification negotiation, and contributes to the construction of inefficient work schemes on farms. Romanticized agrarian strains in the discourse relate to the way that space within this activity system is filled and maintained by cultural markers of white, middle-to upper, college-educated groups, as I describe, below.

Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, and Dale (2016) write that on-farm apprenticeship presents a tension, a “series of ethical, political, and practical questions that stem from the uneasy, or at least contradictory, economic and non-economic character of non-waged farm work” However, what are the on-the-ground expressions of this tension? As my research suggests, this tension may create a new space, one that holds within it logics that are inherently non-economic in character, but yet account for economic realities. Transformational spaces for noncapitalist systems are being constructed (vis a vis Gibson-Graham, 2006), ones where the spaces are not wholly confined or defined by the rules of capitalism. Additionally, actors within the system are negotiating oppositional identities of new possibilities for “community economics” (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013, p. xix). This study empirically demonstrates ways in which these noncapitalistic spaces are constructed – not within productivism, and not yet within communitarianism, but somewhere in an in-between, third, quasi-market space – through emphasis on asceticism, authenticity and meaning, and communitarianism.

Theoretically, the CHAT analysis allows us to see how sociomaterial factors are at work within the identification processes, which is a dimension that has been problematic within social critique discourses. CHAT also provides a way to theorize how identification processes dynamically center the focus on networks, relationships, environments in a dynamic context,

rather than centering the individual (something that identity theory has lacked a specific language for as it draws largely from psychoanalysis, according to Hall [1996]). CHAT has provided an important lens for these factors to be taken into account and included as part of the overall inferences drawn in this study.

Three Divergent Objects: beginning farmer training, cheap labor, authentic lifestyle

Roth and Lee (2007) point out that inner conflicts within the activity system, when recognized can have powerful generative potential for analyzing the sociopolitical forces at work within and “outside” the activity system. In the activity system in this study, one such conflict emerged in the objects of activity. There were three divergent objects of the apprenticeship activity: beginning farmer training, an inexpensive labor source, and the authentic lifestyle experience. No one individual need espouse one sole reason for undertaking on-farm apprenticeship activity, and often the same individual expressed several objects for activity. However, it was often the conflicted nuances behind these reasons that created malcontent and tension.

First, data suggests that on-farm apprenticeship exists for individuals to learn farming and become beginning farmers themselves. This first object was the most often cited and reified rationale for the apprenticeship, both for hosting apprentices and for undertaking an apprenticeship. This is the object most cited in the official communications analyzed within the document analysis. This object aligns with other literature that emphasizes the importance of apprenticeship for training the ‘next generation of farmers’ (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzhny, 2012). While this rationale for the apprenticeship is the most often spoken, I found evidence that the vast majority of apprentices have low commitment to continue as a beginning farmer after the conclusion of the apprenticeship.

A second object emerged, that states that apprentices provide free/cheap labor to farms on the edge of financial viability. This object was not often touted as an important rationale by apprentices, but farmers and educators seemed to place importance on this object. This object focuses on apprenticeship as a labor force for the sustainability-oriented kind of farm: small-scale, diversified, and direct marketing. This aligns with literature that has pointed out this object with its attendant social justice implications (Guthman, 2017; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Levkoe & Ekers 2017).

However, a third object emerged as to the rationale for apprenticeship activity: that the apprentices desire to spend their summer having a meaningful, immersed, authentic, ‘farming lifestyle’ experience. Many of them are navigating identities as oppositional, and sense that this type of farm has something to offer. This expression of a search for meaning, and alignment with lifestyle and aesthetic manifestations, places the activity outside of market-based logics.

These three objects demonstrate a fundamental tension between different values within AAMs. One value expressed is communitarianism, which places emphasis on community, sharing, interdependence and reciprocity. The other value is neoliberalism, or market-based solutions to promote a more ecological, healthy, just, and viable food system.

If we view activity through a neoliberal lens, we can see that education in exchange for labor can be consistent with neoliberal principles, because the educational component is considered a product offered in exchange for job training. As Giroux (1992) and Macedo (1994) would be quick to point out, the master narrative permeates into educational contexts, especially through the emphasis on how educational activities will benefit the learner later by ensuring an income. Ehrenreich (1989) points out that the middle class tends to value educational capital above all other forms of capital, because that is the basis for their status and position above the

proletariat. The educational object of apprenticeship is class-appropriate behavior and palatable to a neoliberal mindset, although money is not necessarily changing hands.

The second object that apprenticeship provides cheap labor to farms is consistent with market-based values, as well, in that it seeks to make the farm as firm more competitive (Carolan, 2012), and was viewed as a way to meet basic labor needs. The third object, however, emerged as an important way to explain why apprentices seem to undertake the experience. The theme stated was that on-farm apprentices were searching for a meaningful life, and considered the on-farm apprenticeship as a means through which to grasp at the ‘authentic’ farm lifestyle. Brookfield (2001) defines commodification as “the process by which a human quality or relationship becomes regarded as a product, good, or commodity to be bought and sold on the open market” (p. 9). These are goals for human interdependencies that are spoken of in the language of capitalism, and specifically heralds the logic of commodification, although the CHAT analysis underscores the multiple purposes of on-farm apprentice activity.

AAM Discourse: Inequity, Identity, Ideology

Here, I illuminate how farm labor is experienced, and how AAM discourse interprets and mediates these experiences in the activity system, at times through the local mediating organization. My findings show how received knowledge from AAM discourse leads to socioperformative rehearsal of white racial privilege being expressed in farm spaces and creating boundaries. It also leads to class-based practices regarding work, passion for the farming lifestyle, and the negotiation of the social stigma of manual labor, and an emphasis on voluntary simplicity and asceticism, which is expressed in farm work. These identification processes create an ‘othering’ or ‘exclusion’ of careful planning of farm labor schedule and practices to make work easy and efficient.

AAMs are social movements that consist of a unified, consistent body of knowledge, skills, and practices that amount to a collective movement identity (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). AAMs critically challenge the dominant food system to improve food and farming to be biophysically sustainable, good for farming communities, health-promoting, and socially just (Constance, Renard & Rivera-Ferre; 2014). The last area of AAM discourse, social justice, is the least developed of all areas of AAM discourse (Guthman, 2014; Sbicca, 2012), and the area of most concern for this research.

Inequity: White Spacemaking

Within the activity system, there were ways in which whiteness was produced and maintained. As a white person who grew up in a color-blind environment (please see my reflexivity statement for my positionality), I understand that the lack of straightforward expressions about race in the data of this study do not attest to any actual lack of racialized themes in the activity system. Within white spaces, race is often a hard issue to bring to the forefront, since those within the spaces do not perceive that anything is amiss. White people are trained not to think about race, and that thinking about race is an act of racism, and is wrong. So, using the conceptual acuity of critical ethnographic methods, I read between the lines to interpret expressions of whiteness within the system.

The spaces within which the on-farm apprenticeships in this study took place are mainly white spaces. Farms were in rural spaces, with a history that makes the farm less welcoming to nonwhites (Hinrichs, 2003). Although I did not take a census, I did note in my field notes that there was a majority of white faces and seldom else. However, as Slocum (2007) points out, whiteness is about more than census numbers. Rather, it engages a conversation of sociocultural norms and hegemonic narratives that are co-constructed and are less accessible to people of

color. Other authors have written about the power, privilege, and property of the popular images of the white male farmer identity (Carlisle, 2013; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007). This makes ‘idyllic’ farm spaces less inviting, and the ‘know your farmer’ rhetoric of AAMs less accessible to people of color. Therein lies the danger in uncritically romanticizing the past, of incidentally asserting the prominence of white narratives in past agrarian histories. This renders invisible racial minority groups within history, especially when accounting for our shared agrarian past of slavery, sharecropping, land access barriers (Allen, 2008; Allen & Sachs; 2013; Guthman, 2008a). Green, Green and Kleiner (2011) say, in their history of African Americans within U.S. agriculture, “the narrative of black farmers shows greater details of the transitions that have taken place, and may help keep us from being overly romantic about the past...it is not a matter of going back to the days of yesteryear, for how can a system based on slavery and sharecropping be considered idyllic?” (p. 60). An aesthetic experience of farming and food that relishes and celebrates the past is therefore problematic for all but the most privileged groups (white, male, affluent).

At Velvet Valley Farm in this study, there was one young Caribbean American female apprentice, Valerie. I spent many of my days there working alongside Valerie. While she is not representative of people of color on farms, she had some interesting observations. She said food access was her number one concern. She was the “healthiest eater in her family” and she wanted to teach her family her new way of eating. She also spent time one day educating another young, white, female apprentice who was promoting the consumer choice logics of Michael Pollan’s (2006) *Omnivore’s Dilemma*. The two discussed the dynamics of why it is hard for low socioeconomic groups to ‘eat healthy,’ which was a new consideration for the white apprentice. Pollan’s perspectives dominate AAM discourse (Lavin, 2009), so this is one example of how

AAM discourse can inadvertently reinforce cultural narratives that are more appropriately white within this space, by sidestepping concerns of food access for marginalized groups.

Valerie also said that she did not feel as comfortable on the farm. She said, as she remarked on the farm and surrounding nature, that she felt “lucky” to be able to experience this, because most people she grew up with would never be able to be in this space. Her experience was one of defiance, as she knew that she was branching out from what was expected of her in her family, by doing an on-farm apprenticeship. Even despite this nonconformist orientation, she still felt uncomfortable on the farm, not because of overt racism, but because of the cultural whiteness of rural spaces. Again, this experience cannot be taken to be representative, but her experience shows one example of a lived expression of encountering the white spaces of an on-farm apprenticeship. None of the white individuals, myself included, had this particular barrier to overcome in participating in the activity system.

Ross, one of the farmers in this study, declared his opinion that he thought the received knowledge from the local mediating organization included what he called “whitey concept.” He said:

I feel like the [workshop’s planning process] is a very whitey concept. It’s like, the rich wealthy, whatever term, white person. You don’t have to be technically white, to be this, it’s just like, this sense of entitlement. It’s like no, it didn’t feel like it was real... People think that one day you’re not going to have to work hard... unless you become a rich whitey, and hire that shit out... just life is work. (Ross, Farmer)

Ross is talking about a workshop in which beginning farmers were asked to clarify their values and goals for farming. He said that many people had an expectation that they would still be able to vacation and earn a comfortable salary, which he equated to whiteness. So Ross points out the reification of ideas put forward within AAM discourse, which was mediating whiteness, in this case.

As Slocum (2007) and Guthman (2014) point out, farmers markets are often white spaces, and are less relevant or accessible to people of color. I noticed that the on-farm apprentices talked about the farmers market in a positive light, but were less aware that they were racially exclusive places (or did not bring it up, as most white people normally do not). As one apprentice shared, she thought the market was populated with “eccentric people... like hippies and young families with their barefoot kids.” So, race at the farmers market was a non-topic.

As Offeh-Gyimah, Kanengoni, and Henry (2017) write, “farming is often connected to family land ownership and culture norms. It also has a lot to do with a messy history of land and race. White colonialists initially settled land and current ownership and farming trends still reflect this” (p. 30). An apprentice on another farm brought two African American youth ages 3 and 5 to one of the farm parties, who she would occasionally care for through a faith-based volunteer program, and both youth were enthusiastic that they wanted to be farmers. Later, the apprentice indicated that she did not think they would become farmers, and cited their race and statistical probability as a reason. She regarded them as outsiders to the system, despite her deep care for the youth.

Additionally, there was very little mention of Latino farm workers. In the precious few instances where they were brought up, they were also regarded as outsiders. Most work on farms is performed for a wage, by migrant farmworkers (Holmes, 2013). The category of farmworker was disregarded as important to the work within this activity system (although on rare occasions, expressing social justice concerns). One apprentice, one of the few to mention Latino workers, said, “when I think of migrant labor I think of huge farms, huge fields full of small Mexican children working for nothing. But smaller scale farms, I have no frame of reference for how

much.” So here they were viewed as irrelevant. Two of the farms that hosted workshops hired migrant workers, and each time the practice was treated as a novelty, a foreign concept. During one farm workshop, about a dozen pick-up trucks, a van, and cars carrying H-2A Latino workers rumbled on and off the farm driving past the crowd, but were not remarked upon by those attending the workshop. I used my sociological imagination and envisioned the vehicles not full of Latino men, but young, white people who looked like your typical on-farm apprentice, and they might have drawn more attention. These examples suggest that Latino farm workers were not considered an integral part of the activity system. So, Latino workers, despite providing most farm labor on most farms in the U.S., were simply invisible and considered outsiders within this activity system.

White people have the privilege of ignoring race as an issue (and have been socialized to do so). Because of the submersion of consciousness about race, there were very few instances where race was openly discussed. Nevertheless, it was clear that these were primarily white spaces where people of other races were given less access, marginalized, and othered. In this way, actors took up space within this activity system through white privilege.

Identity: Class-based Work Practices

On-farm apprentices are most often middle-to-upper class and college educated. This status bears with it an expectation of work, since reproducing laborers is one of the most primary factors in the social reproduction of the conditions for production (Althusser, 1970). People are socialized with a particular class habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), which includes specific knowledge, skills, and preferences regarding appropriate practice, and how to distinguish oneself from other groups. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus operating within a field gives us a mode to understand class-based social reproductive factors. Calhoun (1993) writes that Bourdieu “wanted to show

how patterns of social life could be maintained over time without this being either specifically willed by agents or the result of external factors beyond the reach of agents' wills" (p. 72). So, we consider the sociocultural factors that play out within this system. Since on-farm apprentices and farmers alike normally come from a background of relative privilege and wealth, they are undertaking work activity that is outside their class habitus. However, they recast much of the activity in class-appropriate ways, which include: treating the food itself as a boundary marker of distinction, alignment with 'clean' country living and health, reinterpreting farm work as exercise, embrace of dirt and derision of detractors, and an ascetic bent that accentuates farming as a 'passion' or 'lifestyle' rather than employment for pecuniary gain.

Within the activity system studied here, practices were transformed into class-appropriate activity for middle- to upper-class networks. Boundary markers of what is "inside" and "outside" of the activity system were often related to class. The food was one of the most important markers of what was inside and outside the activity system, and yet as the data shows, within the activity system, the food itself was seen as a mark of sophistication, high class culture, and distinction. This mixing of the oppositional AAM discourse with marks of privilege has been noted in previous studies. Simon (2009), for example, has discussed the countercultural movement within AAMs and the search for authenticity as a classed, privileged behavior. He says:

Increasingly over the last two decades, women and men with higher salaries and more college classes under their belt broke away from the sensible middle class and engaged in a new round of conspicuous consumption. ... Yet they also wanted to show off their education and know-how. That is where the authenticity part mattered and where it became, under Starbucks and Whole Foods and so many other natural-looking chains, more about status and sophistication than it was about the counterculturally tinged consumption and rebellion against the fake... Post-post-hippies... associated authenticity not so much with the search for more genuine products, wrote consumer behavior specialist Michael Solomon in 2003,

as with a range of upscale values, 'like a better lifestyle, personal control, and better taste (p. 38),

As Dressler-Hawke and Mansvelt (2009) state, “food is a necessary part of material life, but it is also an important source of cultural capital that implies status, knowledge, and even luxury” (pp. 299-300). Many of the practitioners chose to align themselves with the clean and healthful parts of the job. For example, many consider their activity to be linked strongly with the food, which is considered to be healthful, ‘clean,’ and sophisticated. As one apprentice says, “you are what you eat... I want to be what I’m eating by eating this awesome plant that’s out there.” Actors spoke in negative terms about food they consider to be outside class-based practice, such as “processed foods,” like Ramen Noodles, Coca-Cola, etc., and were very clear that the food bore status markers associated with it. One apprentice joked, “Doritos and Mountain Dew!... Right! ‘merica! (said with accent)” They were often aware that the food they wanted to align with was considered higher class food. As one participant said: “I’m [quotes in haughty taughty voice] ‘expanding my food vocabulary’ every day, and it’s been amazing!” So, on-farm apprenticeship practice was often considered class-based practice around diet and nutrition. The farm work was considered to be a part of the eating of food appropriate to a middle- to upper-class habitus of distinction in food tastes.

Many also treated farm work as exercise. One apprentice was clear to say that “the farm is my gym.” Another advertisement for the two-wheel tractor advertises that it is “good exercise” which seemed somewhat out of place on an advertisement for a labor-saving piece of farm equipment. There was also quite a lot of talk about yoga – workshops on yoga, and a farmer and apprentices who consider their farm work to be a part of their yoga practice, and thinking of poses they try to maintain while working. The emphasis on yoga tends to obscure the fact that one’s body is being used for physical manual labor. The idea may be ‘move your body, but it

better not be for your livelihood,' idea is a deeply held hidden rule of the privileged classes (Simpson, Hughes, & Slutskaya, 2016). So by associating bodily work with a recreational activity, the idea that one is physically laboring is reconciled in a different sort of way. It obscures the practice of labor and transforms it into a more class-appropriate activity for privileged classes. So, this is an example of how farm work is recast as class appropriate to middle- to upper-class habitus, negotiated by AAM discourse elements.

Actors (apprentices, farmers, and others) often come to farming because they have a desire to 'get their hands dirty,' which is a strain heard within AAM discourse. As a farmer educator pointed out, most farmers and on-farm apprentices are from urban or peri-urban spaces, which is remarked on also by Levkoe and Ekers (2017) and Guthman (2017). The desire to 'get their hands dirty' can be traced back to over a century of back-to-the-land sentiment, which accentuates in the clean utopian ideals of rurality and agrarianism (Hetherington, 2005). Within this activity system, actors often considered this desire to be a major motivator in the activity. I saw plenty of gloveless hands, bare feet and conspicuous lack of consideration for cleanliness (opting for a dirt-covered area for lunch break, even when it would have been relatively easy to relocate to a nearby clean area, for example). These actions suggest that practitioners are negotiating the stigma of dirty work through the embrace of dirt. The underlying tacit assumption behind the imperative to 'get your hands dirty' is that they are normally clean (as in, you are not a manual laborer) and that it is likely temporary.

This study showed a strong leaning towards voluntary simplicity, bordering on asceticism, within this activity system. Actors within the activity system often discussed their desire to "live simply." Material observations corroborated their dedication to principles of asceticism, from lack of tools during work, to carrying heavy bins instead of using the

wheelbarrow sitting in the shed, to a lack of toilet facilities, to very low-calorie foods such as dry beans and rice, in the name of eating local farm products. Voluntary simplicity is one of the primary values that accompanies environmentally green consumption patterns (Haws, Winterich, & Reczek, 2013), which aligns with AAM discourse. Additionally, many discussed a spiritual aspect to their ascetic approach to farm work, especially in terms of closeness to nature. The below apprentice shares a common sentiment about ‘oneness’ in nature, when she says “In nature and with plants and stuff like that is when I feel most connected and aware of like the oneness or grounded and kind of like seeing all this. So I like see farming as spiritual in that way.” Asceticism has been seen as a spiritually righteous path since Weber (1904/2002) penned his thoughts about Puritan work ethics. He argued that the ascetic ethic focuses on labor as the only path to a righteous life. “Even the wealthy shall not eat without working, for even though they do not need to labour to support their own needs, there is God’s commandment which they, like the poor, must obey. For everyone without exception God’s Providence has prepared a calling, which he should profess and in which he should labour.” According to Weber, people in the 19th century also attributed the piety of hard work to agriculture. He says: “the high esteem for agriculture as a peculiarly important branch of activity... not to the landlord, but to the yeoman and farmer” (p. 59). Then, as now, farmwork is interpreted as especially righteous, and small-scale agrarianism, Weber’s “yeoman,” are considered the most righteous. The apprentices were similarly often viewed their farm work through the lens of spiritual practice.

Emphasis on voluntary simplicity or asceticism enable a hard job to be that much harder, by demanding devotion to the inherent ‘hardness’ of the work. Within the data, this was seen through such practices as inadequate tool usage, even when it would have taken minimal effort to use better tools. For example, hand weeding for hours by stooping without gloves, when gloves

and stirrup hoes were sitting in the shed unused. On some farms, apprentices had fourteen-hour work days with hardly a break, where a water break would have been difficult to manage. The voluntary simplicity within AAM discourse buttresses and undergirds this ascetic approach, which transforms manual labor into a more class-appropriate activity.

Guthman (2014) points out a tendency for AAM practitioners to identify with “survivalist” (i.e., getting along on little), [and] antimodernist” (p. 7). One farmer in the study called this a “suck it up’ mentality,” saying, “it’s obviously hard work but it doesn’t have to be crummy, horrible work.” The ascetic mentality therefore is a point of departure – the mentality allows types of labor to be performed on the farm that would otherwise not be performed.

Tokumitsu (2015) defines work ethic as “the idea that a person’s morality is manifest in a person’s approach toward work” (p. 9). However, she sees the “do what you love; love what you do” (Tokumitsu, 2014, p. 1) mentality as a means “to extract cheap work form a labor force that embraces its own exploitation” (p. 8). The imperative to maintain a positive attitude about one’s work is a path towards self-exploitation (see also Beder, 2000). A labor force that does not complain because they have been programmed to ‘think positive’ about work may mean that the labor of the middle- to upper-class can more easily be exploited. Tokumitsu (2015) points out that the “love what you do” mentality also assumes work is a choice. She also notes that “lovable work is visible work” (p. 19) – work that is contrasted among the invisible wage earners who support the work. This coincides with on-farm apprentice’s positive feelings toward farm labor, as well. The love-what-you-do mentality aligns well with the asceticism of farm work, and is class-appropriate behavior for the middle- to upper-class, and not low socioeconomic status groups (who often have little choice in the work they do). Thus, this may be one expression of

negotiation to make manual labor a class-appropriate practice by “loving what you do” as an ascetic expression.

On-farm apprenticeship is a foil against the deskilling of labor. Braverman’s deskilling principle tells us that a force within capitalistic systems is to polarize manual labor from manual (often termed “unskilled”) labor. He says:

Every step in the labor process is divorced, so far as possible, from special knowledge and training and reduced to simple labor., Meanwhile, the relatively few persons for whom special knowledge and training are reserved are freed so far as possible from the obligations of simple labor. In this way, a structure is given to all labor processes that at its extremes polarizes those whose time is infinitely valuable and those whose time is worth almost nothing (p. 83).

Braverman’s deskilling principle plays out in the dominant forms of the agrifood system.

Apprenticeship seeks to reverse this deskilling, since the laborer must learn holistically all aspects of the farming. The focus on nuanced, skilled, expertise in farming, such as that valued on farms within this activity system, and ostensibly being taught to apprentices, is in line with class-based expectations of work. However, if the “obligations of simple labor” accompany this work, a more complicated picture emerges.

Tractors emerged as an interesting boundary object, and were widely discussed as a necessary evil, or disavowed entirely, as rehearsal of alternative agrifood discourse. As one promotional document said of the two-wheel tractor (considered the biggest acceptable size) advertised “farming with your feet on the earth,” which demonstrates the bodily positioning of identification as a farmer (upright, connection to the land). Tractors, acting as they do to separate the farmer or laborer from the dirt, are antithema to the goal of voluntary simplicity, getting one’s hands dirty. The disavowal of the tractor becomes an embrace of dirt.

Many have previously written concerning how on-farm apprentices frequently hold ideological orientations that romanticize and glamorize agrarian lifestyles and identities

(Guthman, 2017; Terry, 2014). My data reinforces this assertion, but goes on to delve into modes through which it is expressed and transformed throughout the ongoing identity construction project of the actors. In general (but with some exceptions), actors, apprentices and farmers alike, were incompletely suturing identities to the popularized vision of ideal-type farmer identities.

Ideology: Reproducing “Crummy, Horrible” Work

On-farm apprenticeship activity is therefore a site of expression for class-based negotiations of farm work, as they may align with racial and class-based norms, and mediated through AAM discourse. So what are the implications for the reproduction of the farm systems that the apprentices work on? Romanticized versions of agrarianism are combining with the ascetic bent to mean that labor on the farms is even harder than it needs to be. This means that apprentices are obtaining a skewed view of the difficulty of farm labor (especially since few have performed manual labor prior to the apprenticeship), while farmers themselves are missing out on efficient labor schemes.

Inge (1969) describes agrarianism as a complex ideological construction that places value on idyllic rural communities, and identifies farmers as possessing traits of rugged individualism, communitarian work, hospitality, spiritual uprightness, bravery, and manliness. Three of these six themes have emerged in this study as possessing implications for social reproduction of labor (rugged individualism, communitarianism, and bravery). These three themes align well with the ascetic bent, and follow a pattern of the tough image of the popular image of a farmer.

Often, the received knowledge from AAM discourse conveyed what Hajdik (2011) colorfully describes as “the Martha Stewart vision of privileged country gentility” (p. 292). She says a “collective cultural nostalgia” (Hajdik, 2011, p. 295) is often expressed within AAMs. Autio, et al (2013) find that AAM actors connect with “authenticity in the sense that the past is

glorified... which then leads to a nostalgia for the real – a fascination and desperate search for real people and real values” (p. 568). However, this nostalgia, the search for the authentic, can lead to romanticized versions, empty signifiers of the desired thing. As Baudrillard (1983) writes in *Simulations*, “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself” (p. 4). System actors were seeking to emulate the signifier of an agrarian vision of the past. Citing the work of Wendell Berry, Guthman (2014) argues that “hired outside labor is considered a sort of moral failing” (p. 11). In a romantic, symbolic view of a farm, the farm family performs the labor, and hired hands are rarely seen. Thus, labor is often invisible in this system, and issues of labor are never carefully planned.

In this way, romanticized elements of the agrarian ethic do not leave much room for honest analysis of how much work and what type of work is appropriate, for the apprentices, but even for the farmers. As one farmer notes, “a phrase that didn’t come up in (workshop), that really is a good one, is a labor schedule. Can I do this with the amount of labor I have?” (Ross, Farmer). Many of the farmers have their own ideas about how much work farming is, and the farmers (with the possible exception of Hank, a former engineer) did not devote much time to labor planning. All are struggling in their own way with the rugged individualism and agrarian ideals, and how that relates to their own labor plans.

These findings thus empirically demonstrate that the deployment of a romanticized, symbolic form of agrarianism is not harmless. This idyll is reproducing unsustainable models for small, diversified farms, because it diverts attention away from efficient use of resources and time. Within the activity system, actors, and even often farmers themselves, often seemed bent on the notion of ascetic and aesthetic versions of farm labor, instead of production for financial

viability. Apprentices may come expecting an ascetic experience of rugged individualism, bravery, and toughness (as one of the farmers, former apprentice, calls the “suck it up” mentality). By omitting the careful planning for easy and efficient farm labor, farmers then do not benefit from the productive labor of skilled farm workers. Some farmers have written that apprentices are not cheaper than paid workers, for this reason (for example, Preston, 2017).

The fact that the lifestyle is emphasized pulls the choice to start farming out of the realm of income/career choice, and places it into the realm of the moral, good, and spiritual. Choice of career is a class habitus appropriate evaluation of what one’s monetary income should be. This is clearly part of why farmers choose to host apprentices – they do not think of their farming in terms of money, and they want to have non-monetary exchanges. Guthman (2017) writes in her speculative piece about farm interns and precarity, that they are undertaking a “purposeful blending of work and leisure” (p. 19), and do not expect to “be very good at farm labor, and none [of the six former interns she spoke with] expected to do it for a living” (p. 16). They have low commitment to farming as a career, which is unsurprising given that farming is entirely outside of their class habitus as a career choice. They choose to undertake farming as an ‘experience,’ rather, which is a choice appropriate to their class habitus.

One interesting side note that bears mention here is the different model for on-farm apprenticeship on one of the study farms, and the varying observations from the farm. This farm, which pays an hourly wage (approximately \$6/hour) for two days a week of work, did not have apprentices living on the farm, This farm devoted over an hour each work day to purely educational activities, yet was the only farm where the apprentices openly complained. They joked openly with the farmer about certain tasks being difficult, often complain to each other, and lack the strong ascetic bent seen on other farms. However, they each had other manual labor

jobs (waitress, line cook, nurse, landscaper, working on another farm). The atmosphere felt very different from at the other farms, more as a typical work site would.

Noncapitalistic Spaces: Stabilizing a Different Path

As social movement activity, AAMs seek to transform the food system, rewrite the rules for society. As an oppositional movement to a dominant food system, AAM discourse critically engages with the dominant food system to improve agrifood to be biophysically sustainable, good for farming communities, health-promoting, and socially just (Constance, Renard & Rivera-Ferre, 2014). In doing so, however, AAMs may inadvertently sidestep or even reinforce the underlying dominant narrative of neoliberalism and capitalism (Harvey, 2005), in the attempt to find workable solutions to issues within the dominant food system, rather than opening up dialogue and considering other possible means of food production, for example in market-based solutionism, anti-statist sentiment (Brown & Getz, 2008a; Guthman, 2014; Lavin, 2009; 2013; Niewolny & Wilson, 2007), and by buttressing oppressive sociocultural narratives of race, gender and class (Guthman, 2011; Slocum, 2007). Until existing power relations within our neoliberal dogma are altered, outcomes of AAM activity will remain elusive (see Allen, 2004; Brown & Getz, 2008a; Guthman, 2008). Recent scholarship has seen a general outpouring of sentiment that scholars must engage critically and reflexively with AAM discourses in order to provide critique, and lay the theoretical groundwork for a substantive opposition to the dominant food system, in order to effect lasting social change (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Allen, 2008; Constance, Renard & Rivera-Ferre, 2014; Friedland, 2010; Guthman, 2008a; Niewolny & Wilson, 2007; Slocum, 2007; to name but a few). My research has drawn my attention to ways in which the neoliberal master narrative is produced and reproduced within the on-farm apprenticeship activity system under study here. These elements are teased apart to examine the

ways where market based logics remain strong, but also to see the ways in which market-based logics are challenged and reinterpreted, to produce a third quasi-market space reminiscent of the community economic spaces of Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013).

How Neoliberalism is Reinforced within the Activity System

The hegemony of neoliberalism is so ubiquitous that it fades into the background as if to be invisible, and appears everywhere expressed simply as common sense (Brookfield, 2001).

However, Hall, Massey, and Rustin, (2013) remind us that no paradigm is ever secure over time:

Commercialisation permeates everywhere, trumps everything. Once the imperatives of a 'market culture' become entrenched, anything goes. Such is the power of the hegemonic common sense. But it is a common sense that has to be produced and maintained... hegemonies, even the neoliberal one, are never totally secure. (p. 19-21)

The ways in which the participants in this study were “producing and maintaining” neoliberal dogma are several, but can be seen within the structural determinants of economic wealth, the reinforcement of vote-with-your-dollar logic, and market logics inherent within the goals of beginning farmer training and cheap labor supply for sustainability-oriented farms.

First, structurally speaking, apprentices' ability to perform farm work at low/no pay for a tenured duration was normally determined by the ability to subsidize the on-farm apprenticeship activity through wealth generation that had happened based on market logics elsewhere. The idea of being able to demand a premium price for farm products is also subsidized by the wealth generation from market-based logics at another time. Occasionally practitioners might occasionally question the arrangement as untenable into an indefinite future, as Victor expresses when he exclaims “I realized, we're fucked! We totally dependent on apprentices for labor!” This critique was generally lodged against the farms' dependence on new annual batches of middle- to upper-class AAM participants, those who could, in the words of farmers in the study: “wealthy,” “financially secure,” possessing of “financial support,” and “affluency.” Many

expressed concern over this in its ill tidings for ‘sustainable’ farm viability generally, but often did not connect this concern to the oppositional stance to neoliberal values, which many participants espoused at other times.

However, some participants expressed a deeper concern that the very market-based forces they oppose are the forces they depend on for a customer base for their farm products, as Melvin when he says with a note of bitterness, “I can work towards a better food system for everybody, but in the meantime I’m going to sell things to restaurants that are feeding tourists.” That the market niche character of organic and sustainability-oriented farming counteracts its alterity has been written about elsewhere (for example, Carolan, 2012; Constance, Renard & Rivera-Ferre, 2014; Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013), and much can be said of this dynamic, but I mention it here only briefly here to point out one way in which neoliberal dogma is reproduced within the activity system under study. This tension is a reminder of the tenuous arrangement under which small farms operate.

Second, participants maintained that consumer choice was the major mechanism for social change, with low engagement in political action toward state-centered change mechanisms. As Fiona, a farmer says of grocery store customers, “if 1% of these people shifted to buying local produce, god, that would make such a difference!” The emphasis on consumer choice as the main mechanism for change conveys a vote-with-your-dollar mindset. As Brown and Getz (2008a) discuss, the market-based approach cuts out involvement by the state and places more stock and power in the economy as a fundamental and ‘natural’ system where justice reigns. Guthman (2011) writes poignantly about how the logic of consumer choice assumes free choice, which ignores those who do not have the dollar with which to vote. By

containing more faith in the market to promote social change, this idea is consistent with neoliberal principles, thus it counters opposition to the dominant system.

Third, neoliberal logics are needed to justify the two express objects of the activity system (goals of beginning farmer training and providing a cheap labor supply for the sustainability-oriented farms). The goal of beginning farmer training is often undertaken by farmers for the noncapitalist reason that they want to effect social change by training new farmers and reproducing their way of farming, as Hank, the farmer in the study, embodies when he says, “I think agriculture and growing food is a pretty important service to society. Passing it on to the next generation is certainly something that needs to be done.” However, the idea that the apprenticeship model is an even exchange of labor for knowledge is where the neoliberal dogma seeps into this arrangement, which creates tension. Much of the malcontent within the activity system came from the assumption that the beginning farmer training imperative was the only spoken goal of the activity. For those who acknowledged the object of providing a cheap labor supply for the sustainability-oriented farms, they saw the education provided by farmers as another “product” or “market niche” to fill, in payment for labor, a chief input of the farm. This productivist logic is consistent with the neoliberal paradigm.

Negotiations and Conflict with Neoliberalism and Productivism

However, many are negotiating their situation within neoliberal paradigms and agricultural productivism. Some have a more nuanced approach than others. As Foucault (1982) might have reminded us, it might be more accessible epistemologically to accept and suture productivist ideas, due to a lifetime of being inundated in neoliberal knowledge regimes. Since AAM has mounted an opposition to neoliberalism, its adherents, those participants in this study, have some of the conceptual tools to resist this paradigm.

The embrace of an oppositional identity as part of an AAM means that the profit motive is cast in a negative light. Monetary exchanges did not therefore appear to be a driving motivational force for farming activity. They consider it a labor of love, a lifestyle, something that is done for the passion of it. So, the way it appears this is often reconciled is to focus on it as a lifestyle and to incorporate divergences from monetary profit motives. For example, while Paula was clear that she had to “make money,” she was devoted to teaching apprentices and the public about “where their food comes from” in order to act in accordance with her ethics and promote social change. Vincent had become comfortable with his farm being productivist and selling to a “niche market,” but still clearly valued apprentices not only for the cheap labor, but the sense of community and enjoyment he got in building relationships with the apprentices. The work of Laforge (2017) also finds tension with productivism. She writes that farmers may engage in direct marketing and other activities, in part, “to allow them to build a stable framework of supportive customers and peers to reinforce their alternative self-identity in a culture dominated by productivist ideals” (p. 227).

The tension between conflicting narratives was getting nevertheless sutured into identities, where an uneasy compromise seemed to dwell for many, in which actors were not comfortable with either extreme. Farmers and apprentices alike in this study come with noneconomic values of communitarianism, yet are forced to engage dominant agricultural knowledge regimes of productivism that see only economic incentives as rational drivers to guide their activity. In this way, they were being interpellated into agrarian identities for which they have a dialectically opposed ideological orientation. Participants were negotiating this tension in myriad ways, but newcomers (apprentices and others) were often simply unable to assimilate this dominant knowledge regime, given their oppositional discursive responses.

The emphasis on community, sharing, and reciprocity, is one theme that governs this activity system. The communitarian mindset is seen in many ways. For example, one farmer hosting a workshop was asked if he misses connection to customers, and what ensued was a conversation that entailed several farmers searching the farmer for non-monetary motives, performing identities with different locations in relation to noncapitalism versus productivism. For some, they adopt productivist ideas because they accept the idea that farmers should produce healthy food for their community, and they negotiate the productivist mindset by folding it into their communitarian ethic of producing food for your neighbors/friends/community. . As actors grapple with the conflict between communitarian and productivist values, it is easy to fall back on the comfort of the master narrative and language of capitalism, yet their oppositional identities do not allow them to relinquish movement in noncapitalist spaces, as well.

Additionally, the decision to undertake an apprenticeship is not fundamentally ruled by the self-interested profit motive of capitalism. In the third object that CHAT analysis revealed for on-farm apprenticeship activity, the pursuit of an authentic lifestyle experience, the desire does not stem from any monetized or commodified desire. It is a social, values-based decision process that leads someone to choose for themselves the apprenticeship activity, one in which a viable career path may not result, one which, considering the opportunity cost of an agricultural season, draws one farther from financial success and material wealth accumulation.

Since AAMs mediate much of the identification process for farmers, apprentices, and others within the activity system before and during their appearance in the network, they are informed by an oppositional mindset. Hall (1996) tells us that an oppositional mindset often tends to reject messages as outside and other to one's own identity. A number of those in the activity system reject productivist credo. For example, one apprentice believes the farm she

works on is a “more like a factory than a small farm,” while another left the farm mid-season because the farmer expected her to work longer hours rather than meet and get to know guests on the farm. These apprentices are often thought of as failed, or unable to leave behind their “romantic notions” of farming. However, through Hall’s identification perspectives we can see that these apprentices often were unable to let go of their oppositional identities and see things through a more productivist, neoliberal lens. In fact, many of the farmers also show evidence of never having fully adopted a productivist lens. Ross, for example, still ponders communal forms his farm might take in the future, while Christoph says that they still grow what they like even if it’s not the most profitable. Fiona and Frank have scaled back production so that, they say, they might take more naps and spend more time with their children. Hank, for example, takes 1-2 hours out of each 7-hour work day to teach.

These are choices that are fundamentally noncapitalist. These decisions exist outside of market-based logics. These actors are not attempting to ensure higher yields at the lowest costs. They are not attempting to maximize profits. Notwithstanding the oft-mentioned reprise that farms must stay financially afloat, these farmers, apprentices, and others present in the activity system are resisting the ‘professionalization’ and ‘marketization’ of their activity. By doing so, they are creating non-market spaces, where other rules apply, other logics govern activity (Sandel, 2012; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013). Wendell Berry (2009) writes: “we can see that the single standard of productivity has failed. Now we must learn to replace that standard by one that is more comprehensive: the standard of nature” (p. 2).

A Third Type of Space: Nonmarket/Quasimarket Interdependences

If nonmarket rules apply, what are these rules that keep this activity system functioning? A full answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study, and would involve a treatment of

the classical agrarian question of the “political consequences of capitalist transition in the countryside” (McMichael, 1997, p. 631). Yet, the full CHAT-based analysis has yielded a limited list of rules, meaning units, pieces of the discourse, that were being used as rules and modes of operating that were holding up, supporting, and reinforcing the activity. This is a start to understanding what keeps these system actors performing their roles. Many of these rules do not have to do with market logics, or are, at best, ‘quasimarket.’ Here, in the attempt to delineate the rules of the activity system, I do not seek to ossify and reify them. Inasmuch as by calling them into focus and prominence as distinct categories, we may honestly and clearly examine them, reworking some, throwing out others, in an attempt to create a “stable intermediary” (Latour, 2007, p. 257) of possibility outside of essentialized categories. These rules give us a system of interdependencies that exist in a nonmarket/quasimarket third space. These are:

- Sense of belonging, membership in a movement (AAM)
- Values of voluntary simplicity, asceticism
- Valorizing farmers and the authentic, meaningful, farming “lifestyle”
- Alignment with clean and healthy parts of the job, also dirty parts of the job
- Values of communitarianism

These sociocultural rules governing the activity system are discussed in finer detail, below.

First, this activity system is governed by the inescapable influence of AAM discourse, which is the main glue that binds this activity system together and makes actors part of a larger whole, or part of a movement. This creates a sense of solidarity and common language for actors. The strains in AAM discourse and sociomaterial markers are one way that insiders are distinguished from outsiders. This shared repertoire of knowledge, skills, and behaviors was not necessarily limited to food or farming practice. For example, insiders shared similar fashion aesthetics, and were conversant in yoga. While a sense of belonging is a vital part of a social movement (Snow, 2011), the cultural markings of such things as fashion aesthetics and yoga

were one way that white, middle- to upper-class, urban/peri-urban culture was produced and maintained within this activity system.

Another rule is the aforementioned asceticism and voluntary simplicity, and/or asceticism. Voluntary simplicity asks individuals to forego material goods (Elgin, 1981), while asceticism often espouses more of a spiritual bent. It is this ascetic bent that enables practitioners to undergo long hours of hard work in order to find the path towards upright, moral living. However, most practitioners of voluntary simplicity are white, college educated, and from relatively affluent backgrounds (Elgin, 1981).

One of the other rules that enables interdependence is the valorization of farmers and their lifestyle, which is seen as “authentic” and “meaningful.” Authenticity is often attached to AAMs, since, as Sims (2009) writes of food tourism, “‘local food’ has the potential to enhance the visitor experience by connecting consumers to the region and its perceived culture and heritage” (p. 38). Within the activity system, a theme that was repeated throughout was the search for meaning and purpose, and the connection that farming as a lifestyle or path would lead to meaning and purpose in life.

Another nonmarket/quasimarket rule that defines codependencies within the system came from the focus on clean parts of the job, and focus on healthy aspects. For Simpson, Hughes, and Slutskaya (2016), people attempt to reconcile the stigma of dirty work in a positive way is through alignment with clean parts of the job. Actors are therefore aligning with the healthy food being produced, cooking and eating that food, and embracing farm work as exercise. The back to the land movement is replete with ideas of clean, healthy country living (Hetherington, 2005), and here, this is what participants appear to adhere to throughout their experience. On the flip side, Simpson, Hughes, & Slutskaya (2016) also point out an approach to negotiating the dirty

work stigma to create a positive self-narrative is to embrace the dirt and delegitimize would-be detractors. This aligns well with the AAM's strain in the discourse that instructs people to "get your hands dirty." AAM discourse is functioning to allow the dirty work stigma to be downplayed.

A last rule that is followed that holds the activity system together is the emphasis on communitarianism which places emphasis on community, sharing, interdependence and reciprocity. The emphasis on communitarianism is often felt as a caring for others in a beneficent manner, as when all the apprentices on Velvet Valley Farm would eat together, or when another farm pooled their stipends to collectively purchase staple goods from the grocery store. It also showed up when people would slow down or speed up their work in order to stay alongside each other as we worked in rows. This value can often act as a foil against neoliberal values.

As mentioned above, the third object, the authentic lifestyle experience and search for meaning, has a different arrangement, one that dwells in a noncapitalistic space. Radical openings in noncapitalistic spaces, "when the concept of hegemony is applied at the site of everyday politics, new territory is created for enacting a community economy." (Gordon, 2016, p. 73). The apprenticeship arrangement has many noncapitalist elements (sense of belonging in AAMs, asceticism, valorizing farmers and their lifestyle, aligning with clean or dirty parts of the job and health, and communitarianism). The rules of the interaction, not being purely productivist, and not being purely communitarian, need to be described and theorized as something entirely different. Here, I need to conceptualize them as Latour's (2007) "faithful and stable intermediary" (p. 257). Gibson-Graham (2013) recommend to diversify our understandings of the economy, creating an inventory of non-capitalist market forces, reframe relationships in noncapitalist terms, exploring interdependence with humans and the material,

and finally, identify incongruences that can be addressed through collaborative action. For Guthman (2017), on-farm apprenticeships are “engaged in a politics of work reconfiguration” (p. 19).

Katherine Gibson sees her work in light of Latour (2007) when he says that scholars in the act of knowledge production are “extending the range of entities at work in the world and actively participating in transforming some of them into faithful and stable intermediaries” (p. 257). In designing a framework to make visible the “community economy” (Gibson-Graham, 2013, p. 6), they seek to create noncapitalist spaces into a “faithful and stable” intermediary of the forms of interconnection that sustain and support lives. Thus, they allow for a privileged (academic) knowledge to emerge that draws focus to noncapitalist spaces.

Identities may be easier to form in relation to capital, as actors wrestle with the neoliberal paradigm in their activity. Thus, many have difficulty negotiating their specific values (work ethics) within the noncapitalist space, since they enter ethically uncharted terrain. Many fall back on productivism because the neoliberal ideas and language are familiar enough to seem “common sense” or “obvious” (Brookfield, 2001, p. 12). However, by stabilizing the third space, a nonmarket or quasimarket space, by naming and theorizing it, the realm of possibility widens.

Constructing Identities, Bodies, and the Sociomaterial

This study has employed several theoretical bodies working in tandem to help understand dimensions of this complex phenomenon. This was particularly useful in highlighting structural conditions alongside sociocultural elements, while paying careful attention to the material.

The theoretical objects of CHAT include subject, object, tools/materials, rules, community, division of labor, and outcome. The theoretical constructs of CHAT were useful in drawing attention to all aspects of the activity system as one uses ethnographic case study

methods. Especially since in qualitative research one often pays attention to theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) within the activity system, research ensures that the constructs of CHAT are all present in the data. In this way, a thick description emerges (Geertz, 1973) that includes data that is relevant to a critical analysis of structural determinants that will be particularly relevant in drawing inferences about identity politics. So, CHAT was a particularly useful conceptual tool for this critical analysis.

In creating a unit of analysis that consists of the entire system of activity, CHAT dimensions draw attention to the structural, the contextual factors, and draw attention away from the individual. CHAT therefore is one theory that helps in understanding dimensions of experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003) in a constructivist vein (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In the words of Fenwick, Edwards, and Sawchuk (2011), CHAT:

Understand[s] human knowledge and learning in the system to be embedded in material action and inter-action (or intra-action) rather than focusing strictly on internalized concepts, meanings, and feelings for any one participant. In other words, they do not privilege human consciousness or intention in any conventional sense, but trace how knowledge, knowers, and known (representations, subjects, and objects) emerge together with/in activity (p. 6).

Thus, CHAT embraces a poststructuralist credo of constructivist logic. However, despite its encompassing of poststructural thought, it nevertheless produces divisions to make sense of this activity in dimensions that produce a generative sense-making of the activity. Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk also point out that CHAT: “acknowledge[s] the process of boundary making and exclusion that establish what we take to be systems and their internal elements” (p. 6). This gives CHAT a strength of analysis that enabled it to act as a central theoretical foundation upon which to also take into consideration the identification processes of Hall (1996) and the cognitive praxis of Eyerman and Jamison (1991).

As the study progressed, I noted that structural determinants and activity were inadequate to help conceptualize the meaning making that was occurring for participants within the activity system. Collective movement identity, even as helpful as the construct of cognitive praxis is in understanding how AAMs were mediating knowledge, still was unable to allow me to dimensionalize the meaning making that was negotiated every day in the field. There are many ways in which identity formation is not an “on-off” switch where actors could be said to be learning within AAMs, and a more nuanced approach is needed. Hall, therefore, provides multiple layers of understanding identity, through which I saw the forming of assemblages of oppositional identities, assimilative identity elements, and negotiated elements, all in a fluid, ever-changing scene unfolding within the subjects of the activity system. Only after I started thinking with Hall’s identification dimensions, did it become apparent that on-farm actors (farmers, apprentices, and others) were constantly recursively negotiating identity on received forms of knowledge from AAMs, tacit knowledge derived from context and social interaction, and incorporating other signifiers related to class and race.

Hall (1996), however, writes of the trouble with understanding identification processes. He says they have trouble incorporating sociomaterial. After the postmodern turn, essentialization was dissolved into a one abstract lack of reality, offering only a series of fluid mental constructions and symbols, doing away with absolute Fact and Truth. In Lather’s (1991) words, after the postmodern turn, “the crisis of representation is an erosion of confidence in in prevailing concepts of knowledge and truth. Whatever ‘the real’ is, it is discursive. Rather than dismissing ‘the real,’ postmodernism foregrounds how discourses shape our experience of ‘the real’” (p. 25). The consequence for understanding identity, however, became the unresolved

questioning of how, if at all, one should understand the body. For Butler, the body is unattached to identity expressions. Foucault also demands that the body is only a signifier.

While Marx (1867) established the materialist approach (Lather, 1991) – the main argument being that class-based structural determinants reproduce power relations – Althusser (1970) updated this logic to include ideological state apparatuses as a means whereby sociocultural factors are also implicated in reproduction. The interplay of material and sociocultural has undergone a post-materialist translation (Lather, 1991), in part due to the work of Foucault (1977) and Butler (1993). Foucault established the important concept of discipline through which actors police their bodies, based on sociocultural dictates and norms, whereby we construct ourselves to be ‘acceptable’ or at least ‘adequate’ within society. Butler confirms that no single actor is omitted from this practice, while our relation to sexed and gendered norms acts as a foundation and ground for any other identification. Hall (1996) has pointed out that the body cannot be separated from identity, however, as the foundation to which identities must cling, but due to the influences of the post-materialists, lacks a language with which to speak about the material in identity processes.

This theorization of identity processes, does not allow much room for understanding how sociomaterial factors come into play as expressions that exert force on the networks that actors are a part of. However the material is socially constructed (hence the use of the term, ‘sociomaterial’), the question of whether it is infinitely malleable has not been firmly resolved within social research (Lather, 1991). How firmly is identity rooted in the body and/or other materials that may exert force? Social researchers must understand identity well enough to examine networks that include human actors, in order to theorize about these systems, create social change, end oppression, and otherwise have real impacts. So, identification processes, an

important theory, would stand to benefit from a way to draw out conceptualizations of the body and materials that exert force on identity negotiation and knowledge in power.

In this study, the interaction between these theoretical orientations has enabled me to dimensionalize elements of the sociomaterial that were at play for apprentices and farmers to construct and maintain identities. The bodies of the apprentices, although malleable in the identification, often were inadequately sutured into the role that the apprentices intended to perform as ruggedly individualistic (romanticized) agrarians. As the data showed, many of the apprentices were thus unable to bridge the gap between their intended identification process and the sociomaterial reality of manual labor on the farm. This created cognitive dissonance, even disillusionment, among the apprentices. Given this foundation through which to understand this phenomenon, it is therefore unsurprising that the majority of the apprentices did not express a commitment to go on to become farmers themselves. This agrees with other studies (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Terry, 2014).

CHAT analysis therefore provided a way to conceptualize how the sociomaterial exerted force on identification processes of system actors. The works of Hall (1997), Butler (1993) and Foucault (1977, 1984), due to the influence of psychoanalysis, are stranded in the language of the individual thinker. This language, focused around the deconstructive politics of identity and body, does not have a way to allow for factors of the material. CHAT provides a way for these theories to break free of individual-level talk into identification as concerning systems of actors and environments in fluid exchange, enabling possibilities for material factors to be taken into account.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study presents itself in three areas. First, it adds to agrifood studies through analysis of how AAM discourse expresses itself empirically within an activity system. Second, its significance to farm labor policy entails the examination of a labor source for small, diversified, direct marketing farms. Third, the study serves as an example of how critical ethnographic case study methodology is helpful to study an activity system. Fourth, its deployment of CHAT analysis shows how this theory can act as a backbone to underscore the sociomaterialism in research.

The study demonstrates empirically how the cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991) of AAM discourse is lived within a network of actors who are engaging in social interaction towards a common goal. As oppositional in stance to the hegemonic food system, AAMs create activity that seeks to create alternatives. In so doing, they are creating praxis that in itself may contain discourse elements that counteract or generate lasting social change. This dissertation research has illuminated specific ways that AAM discourse, as expressed in the lifeworlds of system actors, both recreates and maintains hegemony, but also ways in which the discourse supports and embraces difference.

Second, recent legal scholars have called for a loosening of U.S. laws that pertain to on-farm apprenticeship (Hamilton, 2011; Kalyuzhny, 2011). However, these laws present worker protections that have been hard won by union organizing (UFW, 2015). This has led some to call for minimum wage to be afforded to all apprentices (Farm Commons, 2015; Marr, 2017). The findings of this study center around understanding market, nonmarket, and quasimarket rules that are acting to support and perpetuate the activity here. So, this dissertation research may influence these laws by examining how apprentices and farm labor law intersect, thus allowing for a

deeper understanding of the nuances around the rules that already act to govern this activity system.

Third, this study used critical ethnographic (Carspecken, 1996) case study (Bailey, 2007) methodology. This methodology yielded three datasets, from participant observation, interviews, and documents. Using Greene's (2007) complementary strengths stance in analysis, this methodology allowed me to examine different types of knowledge regimes within the activity system, and see how received knowledge differs from tacit knowledge, which differs from embodied knowledge, which differs from reified knowledge. This play, the boundaries between knowledge regimes, was a generative mode through which to see power in the activity system. The ethnographic case study methodology was an example of a useful way to combine a critical stance within qualitative inquiry through use of multiple datasets.

Fourth, the interaction of theoretical frameworks allowed for various levels of knowledge regimes to appear within the research. CHAT yielded an emphasis on the sociomaterial, while cognitive praxis examined AAM discourse elements, and cultural identity theory showed the suturing and interpellation of the body into signifiers. All of these together yielded a strong dimensionalization of how to communicate symbolic interactions at various levels of the activity system. Also, through seeing the discursive and psychoanalysis constructs of cultural identity theory through the CHAT lens, the study allowed cultural identity theory a productive way to incorporate elements of materialism into considerations of identity, into which its own language hitherto has limited its progress (Hall, 1996).

Limitations of the Study

It is important to understand the limitations of this study. As a qualitative inquiry employing critical ethnographic case study methodology, this study is not intended to, generalize

to circumstances outside the scope of the network that served as the unit of analysis. The findings of this study apply only to the participants within the study. Also, please see my reflexivity statement, contained in this document, to ascertain my positioning of myself as central observer and interpreter within this critical ethnographic case study. Yet, inferences drawn from the findings within this particular research setting may still be helpful in granting insight into the work of researchers and practitioners within other related settings.

Recommendations for Theory

Within this activity system, people perform manual labor, work with dirt, attempt to embody physical bodily health/diet, and consider tools as central to their daily lived experience. This activity system thus demonstrates the need to consider sociomaterial as a force within activity, without which any theorization would be inadequate. Activity theories such as CHAT may be employed as a backbone structure, along with other complementary constructs, within sociological studies that seek to analyze actors and networks. Through this conceptualization, CHAT enables a powerful way to see the sociomaterial (e.g., bodily), and to allow the decentralization of the individual in describing constructivist identification processes.

Recommendations for Practice

This research shows that system actors had a tenuous relationship with market and nonmarket values, and a third, quasimarket space was being created. This space enabled the activity system to function, but had several unfortunate reproductive effects of maintaining expressions of privilege in this space. In order to alter the rules to ensure that white spacemaking and class-based work expectations are downplayed, an examination of the tacit rules must be conducted for each site and localized activity system. So, practitioners may enable future farmers to legitimize their apprenticeship programs through collaborative conceptualization of the ‘rules’

(in a CHAT sense) of their apprenticeship activity. As they make tacit rules explicit, they may more easily alter arrangements to ensure their values of justice and egalitarianism translate into their apprenticeship activity.

Conspicuously absent from this section is the assertion that the minimum wage should be afforded to each apprentice. While this would ensure greater inclusivity of low socioeconomic status groups, and for that reason it may be appropriate in some areas, I hesitate to recommend a universal practice that would bring this quasimarket space under market control. If we are to take seriously the rejection of market mechanisms to solve social problems in AAMs, we understand that systems of oppression are larger than the solutionism of “politics of the possible” (Allen, 2008, p. 159). There is no inherent reason why the quasimarket logics governing this system (at least some of them) may not be accessible to nonwhite and low socioeconomic groups. I think of, specifically, the communitarian values, the sense of belonging to a movement, and the alignment with clean and healthy parts of the job. More information is needed, however, about the rules governing different activity system in which there are AAM actors conducting apprenticeships, such as urban and peri-urban farms that are less reproductive of white spacemaking and upper- to middle-class-based work ethics.

Recommendations for Future Research

To follow on the previous section, first, further research is needed on the ‘rules’ governing this system, in order to map out the levels of interdependence that may or may not be governed by market logics. This may be accomplished through use of Gibson-Graham’s (2013) Community Economy Identi-Kit constructs to parcel out the ways in which values and customs are governing behavior and creating system norms, within or without capitalistic knowledge regimes. This should be accomplished within different types of apprenticeship and beginning

farmer programs, through participation with system actors. Also, this research should be accomplished with a keen eye to focus on apprenticeship programs that seem to be less impacted by social reproduction of white spacemaking and upper- to middle-class work ethics.

Additionally, more research is needed to understand how farmers within this system must translate their practice through dominant agricultural norms that are not conducive to labor justice considerations. Much has been written about the systematic racism and oppression historically promoted through policy and other structures (Carolan, 2012; Guthman, 2013; Holmes, 2013). Shreck, Getz, and Feenstra (2006) write that AAM farmers in their study, through sympathetic to labor justice concerns, thought that “fair and healthy working conditions for farmworkers... [was] simply not economically viable given the realities of the market” (p. 445). This area of literature needs to be further articulated to understand how the apprenticeship phenomenon fits into this system, and how it resists them.

Examine how precarity plays a role in gender-based beginning farmer activity. Many remarked throughout the study that the majority of apprentices were women. Trauger (2004) found that “productivist agricultural models marginalize women from spaces of knowledge” (p. 289). Trauger, Sachs, Barbercheck, Brasier and Kiernan (2010) discuss how women farmers identification process “subverts the ideologies of economic rationality and redefines profitability and success in terms of care, responsibility to the public, and connection to the farm. Resistance to this redefinition is indicated by the belittling many of them have received by the conventional and predominately male farming community around them as they experimented with alternative models of production” (p. 53).

Conclusion

I have conceptualized on-farm apprenticeships as sites of sociocultural identification processes, mediated by AAM discourses, in this research (MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Pilgeram, 2011; Wood, 2013). AAMs are critiqued as being dominated by upper- to middle-class white cultural norms (Allen, 2008; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2007), and engendering values of romanticized agrarianism (as per Guthman, 2014; Carlisle, 2013), and inadvertently reproducing neoliberalist values (Brown & Getz, 2008b; Guthman, 2008b). However, AAMs stand as an important challenger in opposition to the dominant agrifood system (Constance, Renard, & Rivera-Ferre, 2014). As movement scholars, we must tease apart the critiques, to stabilize and strengthen the core space in which alterity can thrive.

On-farm apprenticeship, as one site of AAM socioperformative practice, is often described as beginning farmer training (“learning how to farm”). The critical analysis put forth in this dissertation provides a way of theorizing why on-farm apprentices are mainly white, middle- to upper-class, college-educated, and young. I also observed that white spaces and class-based values about work were functioning to ideologically produce and maintain the activity system. The implications for social justice are many. If white space making is occurring, people of color are granted lower access to on-farm apprenticeship experiences. If class-based work values are maintaining this as a middle- to upper-class space, then there is low access for lower income individuals. This also is potentially an issue if the middle- to upper-class social stigma attached to manual labor trades is poorly integrated into new farmer identities and they do not continue farming after the apprenticeship, as was the case with many participants in this study. The on-farm apprenticeship is thought to train beginning farmers, the lack of access means that those with the greatest social stigma attached to the work are those being trained, and it also means that

beginning farming is less accessible to people of color and low-socioeconomic groups. The class-based work values (most notably asceticism and romanticized agrarianism) are also acting to downplay planning and scheduling labor to ensure that labor is efficient. If labor, as one of the primary costs/inputs on a farm, is not efficient, then the farm will be of questionable financial viability.

I observed three different objects for on-farm apprenticeship activity: beginning farmer training, cheap labor for the sustainability-oriented farms, and an authentic, meaningful farm lifestyle experience. It is in this third object, the search for authentic meaning, where attention is drawn away from market-based explanations for the activity, and towards the creation of a third type of nonmarket/quasimarket space, and where the rules of economics do not apply to explain behavior. Alternatively, the rules that do explain behavior relate to being part of a movement, an ascetic bent, valorizing farmers and the authentic farm lifestyle, alignment with clean/dirty parts of job and bodily health, and communitarianism. The implications here are that this system involved interdependencies that are not inscribed and limited by the rules of market capitalism. By claiming this third space as an area where values govern behavior, we may limit the power of the market, which comprises a real challenge to the dominant master narrative. The question is if inequity being reproduced within on-farm apprenticeship can be addressed without fragmenting the values that make this challenge possible. Can AAMs downplay the significance of asceticism and toughness inherent in romanticized agrarianism, not to mention cultural whiteness, and stay relevant? Or, would this omission interfere too heavily with the collective movement praxis and fragment AAM identities? If these considerations are effectively made visible to practitioners and addressed, on-farm apprenticeship could encompass greater demographic diversity,

reproduction of viable small farm labor models, and stabilized and legitimate nonmarket understandings of what makes on-farm apprenticeship function.

As Brookfield (2001) states, “at the heart of critical theory: the commodity exchange economy comprising capitalism will inevitably generate a series of tensions created by the desire of some of the people for emancipation and the wish of others to prevent this desire being realized.” (p. 10). Scholars of AAMs have, in recent years, created critiques of oppositional stances, without care to stabilize and legitimize more promising pieces of the discourse. If an oppositional stance is to hold water, we as scholars must seek to fix the holes in the logics, and strengthen it against the sea of hegemony. In order to disrupt the existing power structure, we must do better.

Adichie (2017) writes this advice to a friend about her daughter:

Teach her not to attach value to difference.... [b]ecause difference is the reality of our world. And by teaching her about difference, you are equipping her to survive in a diverse world. She must know and understand that people walk different paths in the world and that as long as those paths do no harm to others, they are valid paths that she must respect.... This is the only necessary form of humility: the realization that difference is normal. (p. x)

It is in truly understanding and embracing difference, that we open space for honest and productive critique of oppressive regimes within our agrifood system. By learning how to embrace and navigate difference, we may accept a multiplicity of possibilities (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In the words of Scott Fanello, there is no one right way.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Formal Interview Protocol for Participants in Educational Programming

Share consent form. Read aloud the following:

“I am Lorien MacAuley, and thank you very much for your participation in my doctoral dissertation research to explore and describe how on-farm apprenticeship learning works in alternative agrifood and in agriculture. This interview may last around 60 minutes, but the length of the interview is entirely up to you. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy, and I may take a few notes to keep pace with the interview. There are no right or wrong answers. In all written documents that result from this interview, a pseudonym, or fake name, will be used, and identifying characteristics will be removed, to ensure your anonymity. This interview is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to answer any question, and are free to leave at any time.”

Interview body questions:

1. Please tell me in as much detail as possible how you came to be involved in agriculture.
 - a. Where and what kind of surroundings did you grow up in?
 - b. *[repeat participant's words]* sounds interesting. Could you explain a little more about that?
2. What is your vision of the ideal food system?
 - a. How does the way you think about the agrifood system affect how or what you are learning?
 - b. *[repeat participant's words]* sounds interesting. Could you explain a little more about that?
3. How do you feel about laboring on the farm?
 - a. Have you experienced challenges?
 - b. *[repeat participant's words]* sounds interesting. Could you explain a little more about that?
4. What is the purpose of your on-farm apprenticeship work?
 - a. What do you hope to achieve through this work?
 - b. What do you think are the overall outcomes or results of the on-farm apprenticeship experience?
 - c. *[repeat participant's words]* sounds interesting. Could you explain a little more about that?
5. What are the next steps for you (after the apprenticeship or next season)?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share that you haven't already?

Thank you very much for your time!

APPENDIX B: FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

Spaces

Physical Objects

Actors

Act

Activity

Event

Time

Goals/Object

Feelings

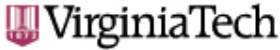
Identification Processes?

Rules or Structural Determinants?

Cultural Work or Social Reproduction?

OTHER IMPRESSIONS

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 12, 2017 

TO: Kim Niewolny, Lorien Eleanora Macauley

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: The Intersection of On-Farm Apprenticeships and Farm Labor within Alternative Agrifood Movements

IRB NUMBER: 16-529

Effective May 10, 2017, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Continuing Review request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7
Protocol Approval Date: May 19, 2017
Protocol Expiration Date: May 18, 2018
Continuing Review Due Date*: May 4, 2018

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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APPENDIX D: Final Codebook for Data Analysis Phase

Table 8: Codebook Used for Data Analysis

| Body of Theory/Literature | Code | Description |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-agrarian | agrarian values, rural communities, self sufficiency |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-collective mvmt ID | collective movement identity/identification as AAM participant |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-comm food secty | community food security, food supply |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-env sust | sustainable ag values, ideas (environment, biophysical) |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-food justice/access | food justice, access, politics, participation, sovereignty, governance |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-food quality/health | aesthetic quality of food, taste, fresh, health properties |
| Alternative Agrifood Movements (AAMs) | AAM-simplicity/local knwldge | asceticism, simplicity, spiritual, local/traditional knowledge |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Commtly | Community, who is community in activity system? |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Div of Labor-dirty work | Addressing beliefs related to dirty work, stigma, mark, negotiation |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Div of Labor-experience | Addressing present and past work experiences |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Div of Labor-theory | Directly theorizing about labor policy/justice |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Object | Object, goal, trying to achieve here |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Outcome | Outcome of activity System, worldwide impact, dreams, visions |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Rules | Rules (via CHAT) |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Subject | Subject (via CHAT) |
| Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) | CHAT-Tools | Mediating Tools/Artifacts, conceptual, bodies of ideas enacted |
| Identification Processes | ID-assmltn | Assimilation of hegemonic assumptions |
| Identification Processes | ID-negotn/oppostn | Negotiation of, or rejection of hegemonic assumptions |
| Identification Processes | ID-outside | Discursive construction of outside, marginalized subjects, boundary |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Identification Processes | ID-suture | Evidence of shift/suture/interpellation of body into signifiers |
| Capitalism/ Noncapitalism | MARX- captsm/noncaptsm | Noncapitalistic spaces, capitalism, neoliberal frames |
| Productivism/ Nonproductivism | MARX- productvm/nonprodvm | Ag productivism or nonproductivism |
| Social Reproduction | MARX-soc reproductv | Evidence of social reproduction |
| Structural determinants | MARX-struc determnts | Evidence/presence of structurally determined elements |
| Class | X-class | Class, signifiers of class privilege |
| Education | X-ed | Education, formal or informal |
| Gender | X-gender | Gender, signifiers of privilege |
| Race | X-race | Race, signifiers of privilege |

APPENDIX E: Research Quality Construct Table

Table 9: Measures of Quality in this Study

| Measures of Quality in Qualitative Research | Recommendations to Enhance Quality | How this Research will Address the Measure |
|---|---|---|
| Methodological Appropriateness (Patton, 2008) | Designs are relevant, rigorous, understandable and produce useful results | Critical ethnographic case study chosen because critical theory examines power relationships; ethnographic methods allow for multiple datasets thus multiple perspectives; and the case study methodology is consistent with activity system as unit of analysis. |
| Lather (1991) | Triangulation | Three datasets were used: participant observations, interviews, and document analysis. |
| Lather (1991) | Construct validity through reflexivity | My field journal contains many reflections that were examined throughout data analysis. |
| Lather (1991) | Face validity through member checking | I plan to share a compilation of results back to the local mediating organization, to receive their input. |
| Lather (1991) | Catalytic validity | My presence as a researcher generally directed attention to the issues inherent in on-farm apprenticeship, which participants were eager to engage. |
| Lincoln and Guba (2003) | Prolonged engagement | Multiple visits and time spent on the farm. |
| Lincoln and Guba (2003) | Persistent observation | Repeat visits temporally throughout the season. |
| Lincoln and Guba (2003) | Triangulation | Multiple datasets (interview transcripts, observational field notes, impressional field notes, materials from organizational meetings), analyzed in tandem through Greene's (2007) complementary strengths stance. |
| Lincoln and Guba (2003) | Peer debriefing, member checking | Interview questions formulated from the analysis of preliminary observation data, to ask members directly about observations |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and Theoretical Generalizability (Flick, 2014) | Thick description | Thick description generated within field notes and augmented by impressions written in field journal and interview data. |
| Dependability and Confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) | Auditing Process | All research activities were documented in a field journal and kept organized, all inferences traced back to original data. |
| Utility (Mertens & Wilson, 2012) | Identify and engage all participants, consult stakeholders to meet their needs | Work with mediating organization to identify all possible participants and stakeholders. Worked with mediating organization to understand how the study and/or data generated can help them meet their programmatic needs. This resulted in a handout summary of the research findings sent to the listserv and disseminated at a conference. |