

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Agricultural Sciences

**PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES IN FARM LABOR MANAGEMENT:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SMALL-SCALE GROWERS
IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA**

A Thesis in

Rural Sociology

by

Audrey L. Schwartzberg

© 2010 Audrey L. Schwartzberg

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

December 2010

The thesis of Audrey Schwartzberg was reviewed and approved* by the following:

C. Clare Hinrichs
Associate Professor of Rural Sociology
Thesis Advisor

Kathryn J. Brasier
Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology

Leland L. Glenna
Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology

Joan S. Thomson
Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education

Ann R. Tickameyer
Professor of Rural Sociology
Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

Many fruit and vegetable farms in the Northeastern United States are characterized by their relatively small size and limited growing season. These features, as well as the labor-intensive nature of horticultural production, make the task of securing and retaining farm workers particularly challenging. Recent sociological literature does not sufficiently address how farmers recruit and manage hired workers to meet the distinctive labor needs on small-scale, seasonal farms. This study addresses this gap in the literature by investigating how small and mid-sized farm operators perceive and experience agricultural labor issues. It specifically explores the various labor management practices small-scale growers have developed to meet their labor needs and how their prior experiences have shaped these strategies. This study draws primarily on in-depth interviews conducted with fruit and vegetable growers on 15 central Pennsylvania farms. Applying an actor-oriented theoretical approach, a qualitative analysis of the interviews contributes to a better understanding of how previous experiences and current farm contexts shape these farmers' perceptions of their labor management challenges and opportunities. This thesis presents findings about the diverse configurations of farm labor arranged and experienced by participant farmers; the comparative influence of key social actors on farmers' labor management decisions; the range of practices farmers ultimately adopt to accomplish necessary farm tasks; and the ways in which farmers interact with workers in their particular employment situations. Findings indicate that participant growers adopt both formal and informal labor management styles as they respond to various social actors including family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory organizations. They also tend to exhibit more accepting or more resistant

attitudes as they respond to particular challenges associated with their interactions with these actors. An analysis of these findings suggests that participant growers enact varying levels and kinds of flexibility, trust, and work ethic in response to various risk factors associated with farm labor management.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	viii.
List of Tables	ix.
Preface	x.
Acknowledgements	xii.
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
1. Introduction of chapter	1
2. Research problem and background information	2
3. Purpose of study	5
4. Main research questions	6
5. Rationale and significance	6
6. Definitions	7
A. Small-scale and mid-sized farms	7
B. Family farms	10
C. Industrialized agriculture	11
7. Overview of thesis	12
CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Framework	13
1. Introduction of chapter	13
2. Previous literature: risk and response in farm labor management	14
A. Risky business	15
B. Major social actors and their influence on farmers' labor decisions	17
Family	18
Hired workers	25
Local community	34
Regulatory organizations	38
3. Theoretical approach	41
A. Structure-oriented perspectives	41
B. Agency-oriented perspectives	43
C. An actor-oriented approach	45
4. Conclusion	47
CHAPTER 3: Research Methods	49
1. Introduction of chapter	49
2. Research sample	50
A. Sampling techniques	50
B. Contacting participants	53

C. Sample characteristics	55
3. Data collection	59
A. Interviews	59
B. Questionnaires	61
C. Field notes	62
4. Data analysis	63
A. Simultaneous data collection and analysis	63
B. Initial readings	64
C. Coding	64
D. Identification and interpretation of findings	65
E. Analysis of findings	66
5. Ethical Issues	67
6. Trustworthiness of the research process	68
A. Researcher perspectives	68
B. Credibility	69
C. Dependability	71
D. Transferability	72
7. Limitations	73
8. Conclusion	74
CHAPTER 4: Interpretation and Analysis of Findings	76
1. Introduction of chapter	76
2. Context	77
3. Divergent labor management styles	81
A. Formal management styles	82
Characterization of formal management styles	82
Influential social actors	86
B. Informal management styles	93
Characterization of informal management styles	93
Influential social actors	97
4. Contrasting responses toward challenge and change	105
A. Accepting responses toward labor challenges	107
Characterization of accepting approaches	107
Influential social actors	111
B. Resistant responses toward labor challenges	121
Characterization of resistant approaches	121
Influential social actors	124
5. Analysis of findings: risk and response in farm labor management	137
6. Conclusion	146
CHAPTER 5: Discussion and Conclusion	148
1. Introduction of chapter	148
2. Discussion	148
3. Contribution to the sociology of agriculture	152

4.	Contribution to practice and policy.....	153
5.	Significance for society.....	156
6.	Weaknesses of the study	157
7.	Recommendations for further research.....	158
8.	Conclusion	161
	References.....	164
	Appendix A: Contact Letter	171
	Appendix B: Telephone Contact Script.....	172
	Appendix C: Background Questionnaire	173
	Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	175
	Appendix E: Implied Consent Form	177

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Hired workers on PA farms.....	3
Figure 1.2: Employment of seasonal workers on PA farms	4
Figure 1.3: PA farms by size in acres	9
Figure 1.4: PA farms by market value of agricultural products sold.....	9
Figure 3.1: Map of five-county sample area.....	51
Figure 4.1: Types of workers employed on participant farms.....	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Production forms and characteristics of sample farms	56
Table 3.2: Sample farms categorized by marketing outlets	57
Table 3.3: Characteristics of sample farms and operators	58
Table 3.4: Sample farms categorized by gross farm income	59
Table 3.5: Employment of farm worker types on sample farms.....	59
Table 4.1: Summary of farm tasks.....	78
Table 4.2: Typical workday on sample farms.....	79

PREFACE

Friday morning in mid-August. Up at 5:30, watching the Weather Channel, and flipping through the funnies over a bowl of raisin bran. My brother is at the table too, and we're both wishing we hadn't stayed up so late to watch the end of the Red Sox game. Despite the desire for one more hour of sleep, we both are out of the house by six. I need to set up the entire store by opening time at nine, with the expectation that we may get one or two early customers. It would be great if I could pick the herbs before the early birds arrive. My brother is picking other heat-sensitive crops like lettuce, Swiss chard, and other greens. We ran out of yellow beans and sweet peppers yesterday evening, so it would be nice to get some of those picked before the store opens.

My father has been up since 4:30, getting some spraying done on the tractor. My mother is still inside, taking care of household chores until around 8 o'clock. She'll have breakfast ready for my father when he comes back from the fields and then head out to pick flowers before the first customers arrive. No time for a trip to the bank today. There's too much to do, and we're short of help in both the store and the field. Fridays are usually pretty busy. Both of my sisters will be coming from Connecticut and Western Massachusetts for the weekend. It'll be nice to have the extra hands. We all know we can't possibly catch up on everything that needs to be done out there, but we'll work on it. At the end of the day at around 8 p.m., we'll have our fill of fresh salad, sweet corn, and sliced peaches and sleep like the dead until another workday begins in the morning.

A pretty typical morning on the farm – at least when I still worked there several years ago. Some things have changed, but a lot remains the same. It's an exhausting routine, but we all would get used to it. The intensity builds up as the season progresses,

and by mid-summer, an 11-hour workday is pretty standard. You'd hardly know what to do with your time if you finished at 5 o'clock. You store up those "free time" activities for the fall, when the hours and intensity of work slacken a bit until the end of the season. In a lot of ways, things would be easier if we had more help. But there are so many trade-offs with hiring new people every year, and sometimes it seems easier just to do most of it ourselves. Then at least you know it's done right.

It's not that they're bad managers. The vegetable farm has been in operation since the 1950s when my grandparents started focusing on vegetables instead of poultry. The farm welcomes more and more appreciative patrons every year. And it's no small task to plan and manage over 30 different vegetable crops on over 30 acres of rocky New England soil. I would argue that my parents and brother are excellent managers. But since most of the family has moved on to other professional pursuits, and the local labor situation has seemingly changed since the "good old days" of willing and affordable teenagers, the management of labor has been a near-constant challenge.

It is my family's ongoing struggle with labor management issues that has influenced my academic interest in the topic of this thesis. I wanted to learn more about why farmers like my family operate the way they do. I wanted to hear from other growers in similar but diverse situations about the ways they manage their labor, as well as the experiences and perceptions that inform their decisions. I hope this thesis adequately addresses the various challenges they face, the ways they cope with these challenges, and the main factors that shape their decisions and actions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge several individuals whose involvement and interest in my research was integral to the completion of this thesis. First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Clare Hinrichs, for her enthusiasm about my research topic, as well as her continual patience and guidance throughout the research and writing processes. I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Kathy Brasier, Leland Glenna, and Joan Thomson for their support and advice during the research process. I would like to thank fellow graduate student Kristal Jones for her help with interview transcriptions after the birth of my son, when I had neither the time nor the energy to spend on the task.

I am deeply indebted to the farmers who participated in this study. I appreciate their openness about the interview topic and the time they took in their busy schedules to speak with me about their farms and labor practices. I am grateful for the opportunity to have traveled to beautiful places in Pennsylvania and meet these remarkable individuals.

I would also like to thank my husband, Ezra, for his continual patience and emotional support. I appreciate the efforts he has made to accommodate my work hours on this thesis. I would also like to thank our son, Asa, for making this thesis writing experience such a memorable one! His birth and presence during this period may have prolonged my graduate experience, but they have also deeply enriched my life, reoriented my priorities, and broadened my perspectives on the meaning of “work.”

Finally, I would like to thank my family, particularly my parents, for inspiring my interest in this research topic. Their strong work ethic and endless commitment to their farm and family are exceptional. This thesis is dedicated to them, because year after year, good times and bad, they persevere in their life’s work.

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

Manual labor is looked down upon in our society, unfortunately. But manual labor is really important. And that's the difficulty... finding someone who is essentially, you know, a hard worker. And willing to learn... There's not a lot of people out there like that. (Farm 9)

1. Introduction of chapter

The broader national discussion about farm labor often neglects the concerns of small and mid-sized farm operators. Instead, the debate largely revolves around the labor issues of large or industrial farm operations that require large crews of workers. For small and mid-sized farms, although they require fewer hired hands, the task of securing and maintaining an adequate workforce remains an ongoing challenge. As these smaller scale farmers weigh the various economic issues of labor needs, labor supply and labor costs, as well as issues regarding social justice and public perceptions, they must also continually consider their farm survival.

My research strives to address these understudied issues by exploring the various labor management strategies that are employed on small and mid-sized farms and the diverse economic and ideological issues that guide farmers' decisions. This exploratory and qualitative study of 15 small and mid-sized seasonal farm operations in Pennsylvania focuses on two main research goals. First, I examine how these farm operators balance their labor resources to accomplish work on their farms. This inquiry explores the work tasks that need to be accomplished on the farm, the workers who perform these tasks, and the incentives that are offered to attract and retain workers. Second, I ask how farmers'

ideas about farming and farm work and their previous experiences with employees influence their decisions regarding labor management. This broad question encompasses various factors that might guide farmers' decisions including their feelings about the nature of farm work, their community roles, and the general's public perceptions of farm work, as well as the needs and skills of family members and hired employees.

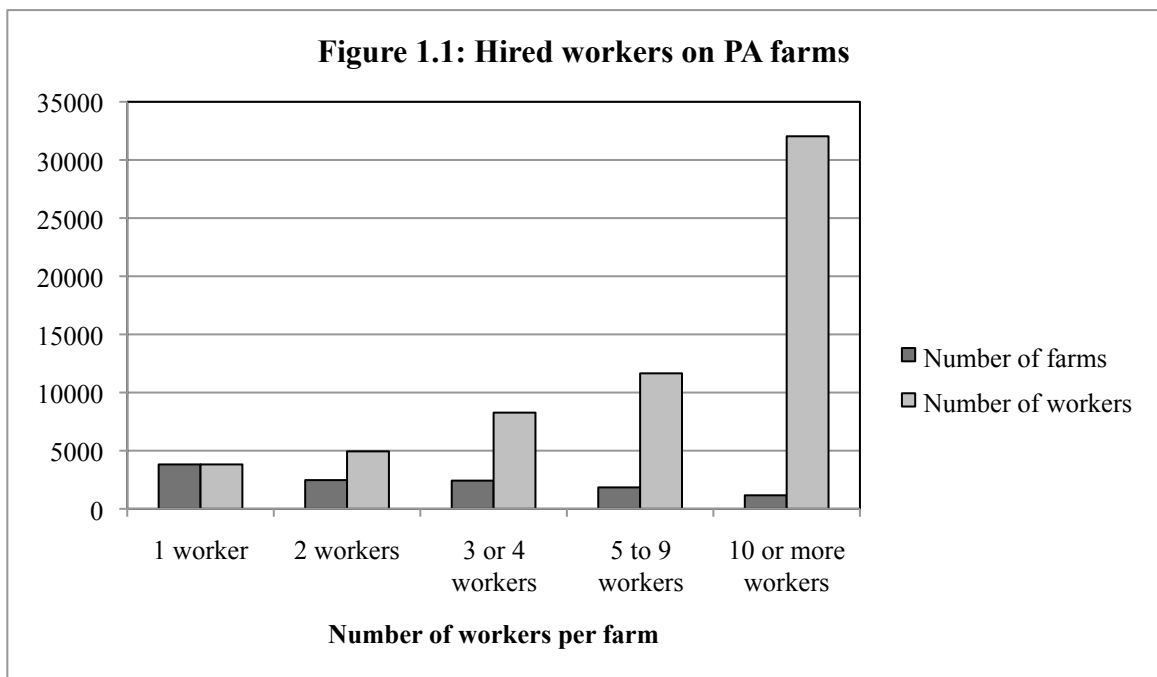
In this chapter, I outline my research problem and important background information that supports my problem statement. I then describe the central purpose of this study and state my main research questions. Next, I briefly explain the rationale and significance of this study. I then discuss definitions of certain terms that may be unclear or problematic. Finally, I present an overview of the remainder of this thesis.

2. Research problem and background information

Small-scale, seasonal farm operators face particular labor management challenges due to inherent limitations associated with farm labor and the expenditure of significant time and resources managing hired workers. Through this research, I endeavor to address these concerns by learning from the perspectives and experiences of a selected group of farmers. In this section, I provide background information that supports the above problem statement.

Farming is characterized by biological limitations including the exceptional seasonality of production and labor needs, the time-sensitive nature of certain farm tasks, and the high perishability of crops (Mann and Dickinson 1978; Pfeffer 1983). All three of these factors are particularly restrictive in fruit and vegetable production, especially in the Northeastern US where the growing season is relatively short compared to high-production states like Florida and California. These natural limitations have an effect on

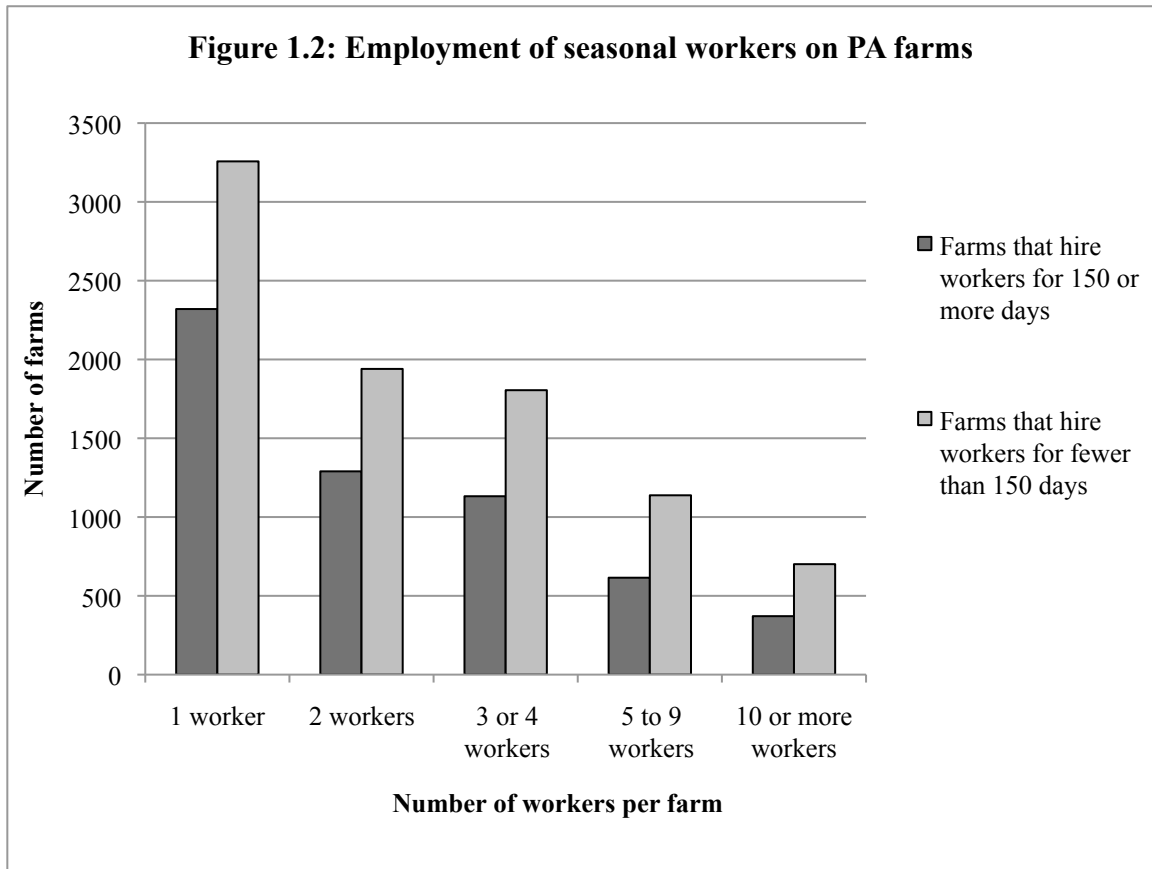
farm labor practices by partially dictating the number of hired workers needed and the amount of days they are required to work. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture (USDA 2007a), nearly 12,000 Pennsylvania farmers employ over 60,000 hired workers. Of these workers, over 36,000 or nearly 60 percent of total hired workers are employed for fewer than 150 days per year. Figure 1.1 categorizes farms by the number of workers hired per farm and illustrates the total number of farms and hired workers in each group.



Source: USDA, 2007 Census of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State and County Data.

Figure 1.2 gives a sense of the highly seasonal and part-time nature of agricultural employment. This figure illustrates the number of farms that reported employing hired workers for more than or fewer than 150 days. Results demonstrate that most farms in Pennsylvania employ relatively few workers, and that many of these workers are not employed year-round. Although farm census data do not adequately

account for the differences in labor needs on farms producing different commodities, these statistics are useful for illustrating the seasonal nature of farm labor needs, as well as the relatively small number of workers required by individual farms. And although the Census does not differentiate fruit and vegetable producers' labor needs from those of other farms, these high-value crops do, in general, require substantially more human labor than other commodities such as beef (Hoppe et al. 2010). In fact, labor expenses can account for as much as 30 to 40 percent of total cash expenses on farms that produce fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and horticultural products (Kanel 2008). This makes these producers particularly sensitive to changes in the cost or availability of seasonal workers (Kanel 2008).



Source: USDA, 2007 Census of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State and County Data.

Pennsylvania farmers spend significant time, energy, and financial resources on the task of securing hired workers for their labor needs. Previous research has shown that small business employers spend a considerable amount of time, one of their most valuable resources, on the tasks of recruiting and training hired employees (Errington and Gasson 1994). This expenditure of farmers' own time results in indirect economic costs. The employment of hired workers and contract labor has more direct influence on financial expenses. The costs associated with hired farm labor account for 12 percent of total farm expenses and cost Pennsylvania farmers a total of almost \$600 million per year (USDA 2007a). Contract labor costs associated with the payment of contractors, crew leaders, cooperatives, or other contract labor organizations account for an additional 1.3 percent of farm expenses and more than \$2.5 million annually (USDA 2007a). It is important to note that these figures represent wages associated with hired workers including paid family workers, but do not account for unpaid family labor (USDA 2007b; Hoppe et al. 2010).¹ Therefore, the actual total spent on farm labor, including family workers who are not formally paid, accounts for an even greater proportion of farmers' total expenses.

3. Purpose of study

The purpose of this research is to identify and interpret growers' shared perceptions and experiences with labor management issues so that their knowledge and experience might inform farm labor practice and policy. I contend that although growers comprise only one facet of a more complex farm labor system, their opinions and

¹ Farm business income statements developed by the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) do not require unincorporated farms to deduct expenses for unpaid labor provided by principle farm operators, their spouses, or other family members (Hoppe et al. 2010).

experiences about this topic are immensely important for shaping farm labor policies.

Small-scale and mid-sized farm operators, because of the significant number of workers they employ and the large number of farms they represent state- and nation-wide, deserve to have their voices heard.

4. Main research questions

I approach this broader purpose with more strictly defined research objectives.

The two main research questions for this study are 1) How are small and mid-sized seasonal farm operators managing their labor forces in order to accomplish work on their farms? and 2) How do their personal perceptions and experiences inform their decisions regarding farm labor management?

5. Rationale and significance

Findings from this exploratory study will help scholars, policy makers, agricultural extension personnel, and other farmers better understand small-scale growers' perspectives and experiences with farm labor issues. This valuable insight and information will increase practical knowledge of labor management options for farmers, agricultural professionals, and agricultural educators. Findings will also help guide farm labor management programs and policy that are economically and socially sustainable for small-scale farmers, their workers, and their communities. This study, along with other research geared toward informing and enabling small-scale and mid-sized farmers, will help keep small farms in operation to the benefit of rural communities and landscapes.

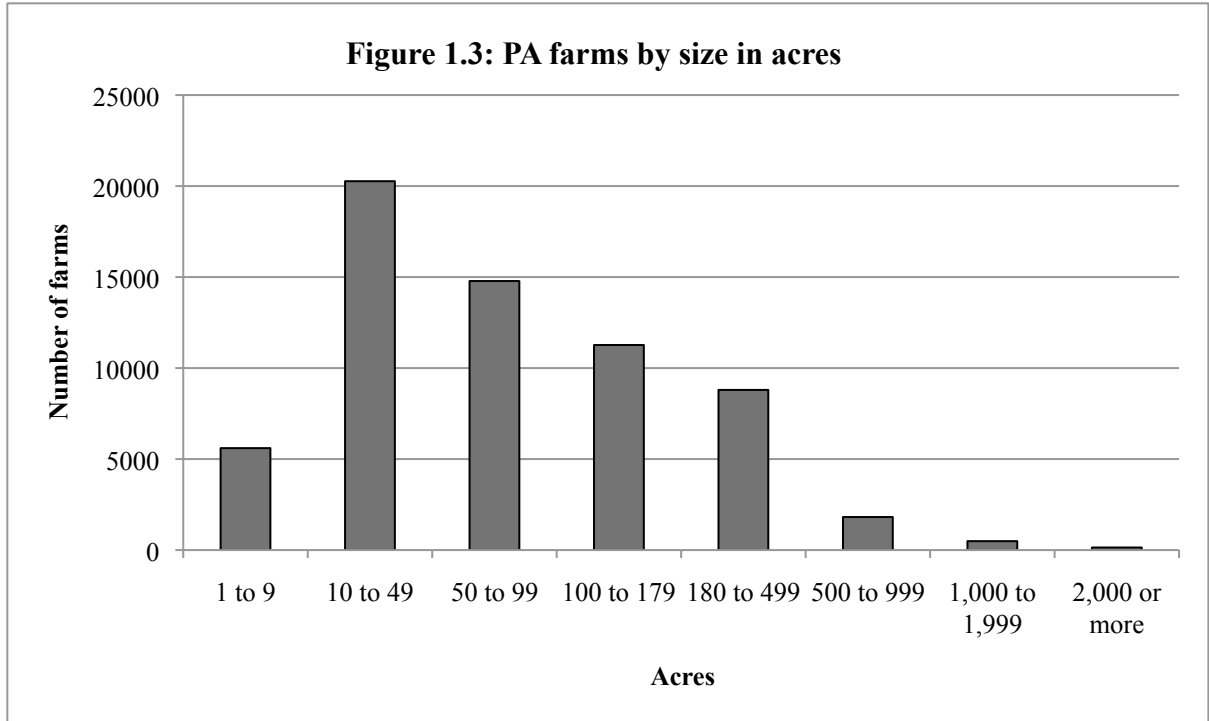
6. Definitions

A. Small-scale and mid-sized farms

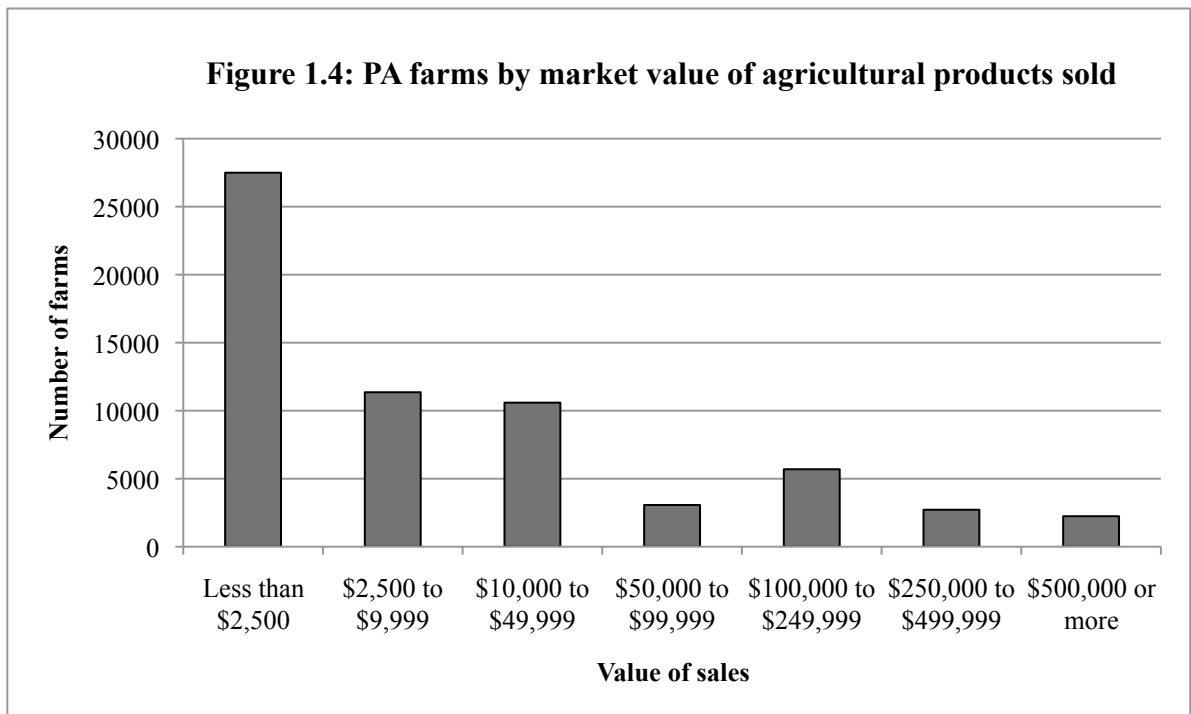
Part of the challenge of researching issues pertaining to small and mid-sized farms is the definition and classification of farm size. Definitional guidelines are problematic, because how farms are categorized can have significant implications for the number and characteristics of farms in each group (Buttel et al. 1990). In research related to farm size, several approaches have been employed. The US Census of Agriculture has traditionally categorized farm size according to gross farm profits (Buttel et al. 1990), but the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) uses both gross income and farm acreage to distinguish farm types (Keys and Roberts 2007). Even farms with larger gross incomes qualify as “small” by other national standards. The National Commission on Small Farms categorizes all farms that gross less than \$250,000 as small farms. The Small Business Administration (SBA) classifies farms as small businesses if their sales total less than \$500,000 (USDA 2005).

In her study of Georgia farmers, Barlett (1993) uses a combination of five different criteria to determine whether the farms in her study were to be classified as large or medium scale. Her categories are based on size, sales, capital investment of machinery, use of irrigation, and use of full-time hired labor. Farms meeting three or more of the above criteria were considered large, and farms meeting two or less of the criteria were counted as medium-scale. Barlett’s multi-criteria assessment of farm size is insightful in its consideration of the many factors that affect smaller farms’ capacity to be productive and viable.

Farms in Central Pennsylvania are generally not large in scale. The average size of all farms in Centre County, for example, is only 130 acres with average gross sales of just over \$60,000 (USDA 2007a). Only 20 of the 1,146 Centre County farms in the Census bring in more than \$500,000 in sales, which would qualify them for the US Census of Agriculture's large farm status. Statewide, average farm acreage is only 124 acres. The majority of the commonwealth's farms would be classified as small or mid-sized with 62.5 percent of total farms grossing less than \$500,000 annually, and more than 99 percent of total farms comprised of less than 1,000 acres. In fact, most Pennsylvania farms, nearly 65 percent, contain less than 100 acres (USDA 2007a). Although the Census of Agriculture does not break down farm acreage statistics according to different commodity groups, vegetable farms tend to be smaller in size because of the high value of their crops and the space-intensity of their agricultural practices. Figures 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate the proportions of farms of varying size in Pennsylvania, using acreage and gross sales as measures.



Source: USDA, 2007 Census of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State and County Data.



Source: USDA, 2007 Census of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State and County Data.

For the purposes of this study, as I describe in more detail in Chapter 3, I use the presence and number of hired workers as the main indicator of small and mid-sized farm scale. I also asked questions about total farm acreage, total production acres, and gross farm income. However, these measures were not considered during the sampling process, but rather used to get a better sense of the range of descriptive characteristics of sample farms.

B. Family farms

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) defines the "family farm" as "any farm where the majority of the business is owned by the operator and individuals related to the operator, including relatives who do not live in the operator's household" (USDA 2010:2). ERS distinguishes family farms as either small or large family farms. Small farms include retirement farms "whose operators report they are retired, although they continue to farm on a small scale;" residential/lifestyle farms "whose operators report a major occupation other than farming;" and farming occupation farms "whose operators report farming as their major occupation" (USDA 2010:2). This latter group includes farms with low sales with gross annual sales less than \$100,000 and medium sales between \$100,000 and \$249,999. The final two categories of family farms are comprised of large family farms that gross between \$250,000 and \$499,999 and very large family farms that gross over \$500,000 on an annual basis. Family farms of different sizes account for 98 percent of farms nationwide and 82 percent of all US agricultural production (USDA 2010).

C. Industrialized agriculture

Goldschmidt (1978) describes industrialized farming in very precise terms. His definition includes the following six characteristics that distinguish industrial farming from a more traditional, family-based farm structure: 1) intensive cultivation; 2) high per-acre and per-farm capital investment; 3) high specialization in single crops on individual farms; 4) highly mechanized operations; 5) large requirements for wage labor, hired on an impersonal basis; and 6) large-scale operations (Goldschmidt 1978). The combination of these factors can be linked to the Marxian notion that once natural and economic limitations of agriculture are reduced, farming becomes more productive, more efficient, and more profitable than the family farm and therefore may reach its full capitalist potential (Mann and Dickinson 1978). This “production function” (Lyson 2004:18) model of farming requires a significant investment of capital in the form of machinery, chemicals, and other purchased inputs, as well as the efficient management of land and labor (Lyson 2004).

However, the concept of industrialized or large-scale farming is problematic because it does not adequately account for the variety of farms that exist in the US. While social scientists have searched for a comprehensive means for categorizing farms by size, no system manages to account for the diversity that exists in American agriculture (Browne 1992). Further, an individual farm may exhibit some aspects of industrial farms, but not others. Therefore, most small and mid-sized farms are situated somewhere along a continuum between small-scale independent commodity producers and large-scale industrialized farming systems.

7. Overview of thesis

In this chapter, I have introduced my research topic, as well as my main research problem and objectives. I have provided background information to support my reasons for addressing growers' concerns about farm labor management. I have described the importance of conducting this study and the significance it will play in the field and for general society. Finally, I have clarified problematic terminology.

The remainder of the thesis is comprised of four chapters. In Chapter 2, I present a conceptual framework that summarizes previous empirical and theoretical literatures that have helped inform and guide this study. I explain how these literatures and theoretical perspectives have been useful in shaping my own approach to my main research objectives. In Chapter 3, I detail the methods I employed throughout the research process including sampling, data collection, and data analysis techniques. I also address issues of ethics, trustworthiness, and the study's limitations. In Chapter 4, I describe salient findings that relate to my main research objectives. I present my interpretations of these findings, as well as an analysis of how they are related to one another. I conclude with Chapter 5, where I discuss important concepts that have arisen in the thesis; implications for academic research, policy and practice; weaknesses of the study; and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2:

Conceptual Framework

1. Introduction of chapter

Literature regarding the labor challenges of small and mid-sized farms is limited. Buttel et al. (1990) note that most sociological research on agricultural labor has focused on labor problems in larger, more industrialized farming systems. While some social scientists have addressed the issue of farm labor within a broader inquiry about the persistence of small farms (Barlett 1993; Bonanno 1987; Mann and Dickinson 1978; Mooney 1988), few have delved more particularly into labor management practices on smaller scale farms and farmers' motivations for adopting these management strategies. In the meantime, much scholarly attention has been paid to alternative food systems that support small farms, local food producers, sustainable agriculture, and the fair trade movement. Many of these studies have focused on the roles of the farmer and the consumer, but rarely have they looked closely at the challenges small-scale, local, and sustainable growers face while managing human resources on the farm. Other disciplines, such as human resource management, agricultural management (Cuykendall et al. 2002), and agricultural economics (Mugera and Bitsch 2005), have produced research on topics related to small farm labor management. The sum of these works, however, does not sufficiently examine the sociological meanings farmers ascribe to various labor management issues.

In this chapter, I develop a conceptual framework from which to address labor issues on small and mid-sized farms. First, I consider previous research contributions that have helped shaped the study's main research questions and analysis of data. This

review of literature is organized by addressing key groups of actors that influence farmers' decisions and actions. Next, I consider various theoretical perspectives that have been employed in previous research on small farms and farm labor. I discuss how these different frameworks might be incorporated to address the specific focus of my study, as well as the broader debate about agricultural labor in the US.

2. Previous literature: risk and response in farm labor management

In this section, I summarize previous research that addresses important issues pertaining to small-scale farms and labor management. I draw from three main bodies of literature to inform my theoretical and methodological approaches. First, although its focus usually is large-scale farming systems, I use farm labor literature to illuminate questions regarding the peculiarities of agriculture with respect to human resource issues. Second, I draw from the small farm literature and, more specifically, studies that inquire about the persistence of small-scale and family farming within an increasingly capitalist and industrial structure. Finally, I apply concepts from small business and human resource management literature to address the more practical aspects of labor management on small farms.

This section addresses important social actors from the literature that influence growers' labor management decisions. First, I provide a sketch of the high-risk setting in which farmers operate from day to day. This summary of literature explores how natural and biological conditions, as well as their impact on markets, affect how farmers perceive the options and strategies they ultimately adopt. Next, I consider how previous literature addresses certain social actors' influence on farmers' practices and perceptions regarding

labor management. This discussion examines how farmers' interactions with family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory agencies shape their decisions.

A. Risky business

The primary objectives of commercial farm operators are the same as those of any other profit-based enterprise. In general, farmers want to maximize profits while reducing risks (Pfeffer 1983). Some risk factors, however, are quite unique to the agricultural sector and are linked to the biological aspects of farming (Pfeffer 1983). First, farmers face the unpredictability and potential losses related to natural forces. Weather, pests, and disease are elements of agricultural production that remain more or less out of the farmer's control (Pfeffer 1983).

Second, market uncertainties represent an additional risk for farmers (Pfeffer 1983). Prices of agricultural commodities fluctuate, and consumer behavior is not entirely predictable. Given the ambiguity of prices and consumer demand, farmers cannot be sure how much they will earn from year to year. The perishable nature of agricultural goods creates added risk. A product that spoils contributes directly to profit loss, and perishable products have limited time to be sold in the market (Mann and Dickinson 1978). Furthermore, the storage and preservation of products does little to add value to the product but results in positive loss to the producer (Mann and Dickinson 1978).

A third and significant risk factor for farmers is the challenge of farm labor management (Pfeffer 1983). Farmers must first be concerned with attracting and maintaining an adequate work force. If they find enough workers, they must also have the means and management skills to secure their employment on the farm for the entire

production cycle or as needed throughout the cycle. For farms characterized by seasonal work, operators face the challenge of retaining workers from one year to the next.

The risks associated with farm labor can be attributed to the exceptional nature of farm work when compared to other means of employment in the service and industrial sectors (Pfeffer 1983). Much farm work, and therefore, much employment of wage labor on farms, is seasonal in nature. Small and mid-sized farms involved in seasonal crop production rarely require the services of full-time workers. This seasonal and part-time nature of labor needs makes it difficult for farmers to retain workers from year to year. Workers are likely to seek employment elsewhere during the off-season and may not return to agricultural work or employment on the same farm (Pfeffer 1983).

Farm work is also sequential in nature (Pfeffer 1983). Activities on the farm are performed in a particular order with specific labor requirements for each period within the production cycle. In this sort of production system, one characterized by periods of activity and waiting between work activities, farm workers may not be satisfied with the uncertainty of the number of work hours and corresponding paychecks. Farmers, however, are generally not likely to employ workers during low-activity periods or pay them for periods of inactivity (Pfeffer 1983).

Related to both the seasonal and sequential nature of farm work is the disjuncture of labor time and production time in the agricultural sector (Mann and Dickinson 1978). Production time describes the amount of time from seed to harvest, but production time in agriculture is significantly longer than labor time when human labor is actually applied to production (Mann and Dickinson 1978). The gap between labor and production times can make it difficult to secure enough workers to supply a farm's labor needs.

To accommodate the uncertainties of agricultural production and marketing, small-scale seasonal farm operators desire a flexible workforce, often comprised of different types of workers (Findeis 2002). In their search for the right mix of worker types, often of varying availability and skill levels, they must consider how to respond to the challenges and benefits offered by the social actors I discuss in this section: family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory organizations.

B. Key social actors and their influence on farmers' labor decisions

In this chapter and throughout the remainder of this thesis, I refer to four groups of social actors that have emerged as important influences on farmers' labor management decisions in the literature and in this study's findings. These actors include family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory organizations. In this literature review and in the analysis of findings I report in Chapter 4, I describe how these various actors, as individuals, groups, and institutions, are influential in growers' labor decisions. This includes a discussion of the ways farmers, as "main actors" in labor management situations, interact with and respond to these other internal and external actors.

In this thesis, my consideration of family actors addresses the ways growers' utilize family members as employees in their farm businesses. This discussion includes farmers' interactions with immediate and extended family members and considers challenges and benefits that arise in family employment arrangements. When I refer to hired workers as actors, I address farmers' concerns and perspectives about non-family wage workers. With this category of actors, I focus on the challenges associated with hiring seasonal farm workers, as well as the relationships that occur between non-family workers and their employers. This category includes both local and non-local workers.

The third actor category, local community, considers farmers' experiences and interactions with individuals from their local communities. I also address how farmers' experiences with local individuals influence their broader perceptions about the availability, willingness, and aptitude of local people as farm workers. This discussion also considers farmers' perceptions of public opinions of farming and farm work and how these perceptions influence their labor management practices. Because local residents are a part of some growers' hired workforces, there is some overlap in the kinds of workers and experiences that are discussed regarding hired workers and local community. Finally, the category of regulatory organizations describes institutional actors that influence growers' attitudes and decisions concerning labor management. Discussions about this actor group consider farmers' responses to governmental regulations, agricultural certification programs, and farm labor policy. In the following sections, I explore previous literature that addresses how farmers' interactions with these various actors influence their perspectives and actions regarding farm labor management.

Family

The concept of the family farm is problematic, because it is not clear how to distinguish it from other farm types. Early perspectives like the Jeffersonian view stress the self-sufficiency of family farms where all decision-making and labor is supplied within the family unit (Errington and Gasson 1994). This ideal of a self-sufficient family-operated farm, however, is increasingly difficult to achieve for various reasons that I will discuss below. A Marxist approach also places labor sources as a distinguishing characteristic. Farms that use only family labor are considered family farms, and those that employ wage workers are regarded as capitalist enterprises

(Errington and Gasson 1994; Friedmann 1978; Mann and Dickinson 1978). Again, this definitional line is not so clear in practice, as many “family farms” must rely on non-family help at some point in time. Fluctuations in seasonal farm work throughout the production cycle, as well as variations within the family cycle, make it difficult to pin down a farm’s family and non-family labor needs from one year to the next (Errington and Gasson 1994). For example, commercial producers are able to fill labor needs during critical periods in the family cycle by relying on temporary access to the labor market or cooperation among households (Friedmann 1978).

The need for hired labor on smaller scale farms can vary considerably depending on the amount of labor available within the farm family. The amount of work performed by family members has significant implications on other factors in the farm labor market such as workers’ wages (Wenger and Buck 1988). The participation of family members in the farm economy and the creation of value in a domestic economy cause the subsidizing of workers’ wages (Wenger and Buck 1988). This results in higher exploitation rates of family workers as well as lower wages for hired hands.

Wenger and Buck (1988) define “exploitation” from a Marxian perspective as “a formal concept referring to the fact that individual producers receive less than the market value of the products of their labor, and that the resulting difference, in the form of a money profit, is moved from a class of producers to a class of owners” (460).

Friedmann’s summation of Chayanov’s notion of “self-exploitation” as “working harder and consuming less in order to preserve the enterprise” (Friedmann 1978:563) supports this conceptualization. Indeed, contemporary studies on small-scale family farms have found that family members are highly invested in the farm business. Farmers themselves

are often the primary source of labor, and members of their families provide a reliable and flexible workforce (Tegegne et al. 2001). This results in higher business profits due to the reduced cost and increased efficiency of employing family on the farm (Tegegne et al. 2001).

The employment of family members can offer many advantages to a farm business. Errington and Gasson (1994) describe some of the strengths, as well as the challenges, associated with using family labor in agriculture. Flexibility is a key benefit of family workers, as they can absorb some of the risks related to the seasonal and biological nature of farm work. Family members can help with seasonal work and time-sensitive jobs that require long hours or short notice (Errington and Gasson 1994). Depending on economic requirements and fluctuations in the family cycle, however, the availability of family labor will likely vary significantly within a farm's existence. When family members become unavailable or increase their off-farm work, the economic advantages decrease as hired workers replace family members in the farm's workforce (Errington and Gasson 1994; Simpson et al. 1988).

The level of commitment to the farm and business is likely to be higher among family members than among hired workers (Errington and Gasson 1994). This kind of commitment is associated with certain aspects of family farms including family ownership and management of the farm, a strong interconnectedness between the business and a way of life, and the likelihood of land and business inheritance within the family (Errington and Gasson 1994). Because of high levels of commitment and long durations of employment on the farm, the human capital investment in family members entails less risk than investing in the training and employment of hired workers who are

less likely to remain on the farm (Errington and Gasson 1994). Family members, however, may lack important management skills or interest in certain managerial tasks that are important to the farm's success (Errington and Gasson 1994).

Another challenge posed by farm management arrangements dependent on family labor is the fluctuations of the family cycle (Errington and Gasson 1994). This variable considers the ages of children, the availability of women due to child-rearing, and the life stage of the farmer (Errington and Gasson 1994). Management and farming practices can be adapted to accommodate these variations, including changes in farm size, adoption of labor-saving technology, and employment of non-family workers (Cuykendall et al. 2002; Simpson et al. 1988). If these strategies are not adopted, however, family cycle fluctuations can result in the under-employment or excessive strain of family members (Errington and Gasson 1994; Harper 2000). This is particularly relevant to farm women, who are more vulnerable to work overload because of their multiple responsibilities including domestic, farm, and off-farm work (Danes and McTavish 1997).

In practical terms, it is beneficial for a family-operated business to employ non-family wage workers when it makes economic sense to do so. In farming, however, labor-hiring decisions can be very complicated. Decision-making can be challenging due to the high risk associated with farming due to uncertain biological and market conditions (Pfeffer 1983). Regarding the hired workers themselves, it can be difficult for farmers to match labor supply with work demand (Errington and Gasson 1994). Individuals' skills and abilities are highly variable, and farmers can find it difficult delegating tasks to hired workers, particularly in light of the high turnover rate associated with agricultural employment. Furthermore, there are many non-wage, time-related costs associated with

farm employment that are particularly demanding of farmers. Errington and Gasson (1994) describe this challenge well when they write, “Time is a finite, non-renewable resource which, if applied to farm work, cannot be used elsewhere” (303). The considerable investment of time in recruiting, training, and supervising workers can be burdensome for farmers (Errington and Gasson 1994). Family workers, due to their accumulated knowledge, extensive time spent on the farm, and their flexibility, help defray many of these non-wage costs.

There is a large body of literature regarding the roles and identities of women on family farms. Because this thesis does not specifically focus on farm women’s roles, the review of this literature is relatively brief. It is important, however, to discuss the flexible and multifaceted nature of women’s roles on the farm, particularly with respect to different kinds of on- and off-farm work and the employment of hired workers.

The elasticity of farm women’s time and the diversity of their roles are rooted in the unique structure of the family farm business. Because of this flexibility, farm women have played an important role in the survival of smaller scale family farms. Many scholars stress the unique structure of the family farm in the way that home and occupation are so closely linked. Because both productive and reproductive labor are integral factors to the functioning of the farm household and enterprise, the roles of farm women in the home and on the farm are diverse and complex (Danes and McTavish 1997; Sachs 1988).

A narrow definition of farm work contributes to the under-representation of women’s work on the farm (Reed et al. 1999; Reimer 1986). Farm work is perceived to take place outside the home and result in capital accumulation (Reed et al. 1999). Farm

women's roles do not always fit this restrictive definition. Women's work is both productive and reproductive and takes place in the home, in the barns, in the fields, and in the community. Their roles are influenced by a host of variables including age, prior farming experience, child rearing, farm commodity, and farm size (Reed et al. 1999; Sachs 1996). Like the work of other farmers and farm workers, farm women's work also varies seasonally. The differentiation of productive and reproductive work is highly debatable. Reproductive roles on the farm are interrelated with production, but equal value is not accorded to women's domestic work (Meares 1997; Sachs 1983). In fact, domestic labor performed by women contributes directly and indirectly to the economic viability of the family farm (Meares 1997; Reimer 1986). Women's reproductive contributions are economically tangible because they subsidize the family enterprise, reduce food expenses, and save money on childcare (Reimer 1986). Although the economic benefits of these domestic roles are often not formally calculated, the productive nature of reproductive work should be acknowledged. In many farm family operations, "farm and household are one" (Reimer 1986:145).

Although their level of involvement in farm work varies, women demonstrate the ability to adapt to changes in the market and on the farm (Danes and McTavish 1997). Many small-scale family farms are heavily supported by off-farm work, often performed by women (Godwin and Marlowe 1990; Moore 1989). Off-farm employment has been increasingly common for small and mid-sized farmers as they seek to diversify their economic resources to ensure their farms' survival (Buttel et al. 1990; Mishra et al. 2002; Simpson et al. 1988). Off-farm employment is an important source for family income, health insurance benefits, and retirement benefits (Mishra et al. 2002). These jobs can

significantly affect the amount and nature of work performed by women on the farm (Goodwin and Marlowe 1990; Hall and Mogyorody 1997; Rosenfeld 1986). As family farms adopt more capitalist strategies, and farmers hire wage workers, paid labor has the potential to replace farm women's unpaid labor. Each of these shifts in family-based agricultural operations has significant implications for the roles of farm women.

Simpson et al. (1988) suggest that farm women are more likely than men to be affected by such changes because their roles are less deeply embedded in traditional agricultural organizations. The authors contend that farm commodity, farm size, degree of mechanization, and the number of hired workers affect women's farm work more than men's. Some research indicates that women's participation in off-farm work can reduce women's farm involvement and place them in a secondary position on the farm (Godwin and Marlowe 1990; Simpson et al. 1988).

Often small farms and, in particular, mid-sized farms, need to search beyond family members to satisfy their labor needs. This need is especially significant as more farm operators do not fill the typical description of family farmers. These include women farmers and farmers who are not married and do not have families. And, while smaller-scale farms do not require the same large crews of workers that large, industrial farms employ, they often rely on wage workers for at least part of the production cycle. A growing trend of farm families that depend on off-farm income further increases the need for hired labor on smaller-scale farms (Findeis 2002). The following section presents some of the challenges and benefits that are associated with the employment of non-family farm workers.

Hired workers

In the debate about farm labor issues, the concerns of the workers themselves must be considered. Work in the agricultural sector differs greatly from comparable unskilled or low-skill jobs in the service and industrial sectors. Understanding these differences is important for a balanced discussion about social justice and economic sustainability for agricultural laborers.

Historically, there has been little incentive for workers to remain in agricultural employment (Fulton 1983). Agricultural work is characterized by low wages, few or no benefits, long hours, and unsafe working conditions (Findeis 2002; Fulton 1983; Kanel 2008). While workers are sometimes provided in-kind benefits like food, housing, or use of a vehicle (Barlett 1993), these benefits are generally not competitive with those of alternative job markets. Agricultural work, like other undesirable secondary labor markets, is also characterized by a high turnover rate, little opportunity for career advancement, and the absence of work rules, formal grievance procedures, and job evaluation methods (Vaupel 1997). Again, the seasonality of agricultural work presents problems for both the farmer and the farm worker. Due to low wages and intermittent work, agricultural workers are likely to require additional income during the off-season. The need for employment in the off-season can lead them away from farm work toward a more certain job in industry or service.

Findeis (2002) categorizes farm workers into three types depending on the labor needs of the farmer. Full-time workers are hired on a full-time, year-round basis. They are more likely to be employed on large farms than on smaller-scale farms. This segment of the farm worker population is rising in some regions of the country as the size of large

farms increases. Findeis points out that while full-time workers generally earn a higher overall income from agriculture, their employment is not necessarily year-round. Despite the increased certainty of full-time farm work, farmers continue to have difficulties attracting workers because of growing demands for better hours, wages, and benefits (Findeis 2002).

A second category of farm workers consists of casual workers. Casual employment is characterized by less formal and more flexible working hours dependent on the specific labor needs of the farmer (Findeis 2002). Casual workers are hired as needed according to the seasonal and sequential work activities on the farm. While this is very common for smaller farms and farms where family members perform much of the farm work, casual workers are not as accessible as they have been in the past. This trend is often attributed to less interest in farming among young people and the rapid growth of the service industry that supplies unskilled workers with job opportunities (Findeis 2002).

A final category of workers, part-time or seasonal workers, makes up a much larger proportion of farm laborers. Because of various challenges in securing and retaining seasonal workers, this type of farm employment creates uncertainties for both the farmer and the worker. Farmers cannot be sure that seasonal workers will remain for the entire production cycle or that they will return the following year (Pfeffer 1983). Workers, in the meantime, are concerned about an insecure working situation characterized by low wages, few benefits, and uncertain hours (Findeis 2002; Kanel 2008).

The challenge of securing a seasonal labor force presents farmers with questions about the source of their labor. Farmers must assess labor market conditions and their

own needs on the farm. An important question addresses whether or not local workers can provide adequate labor or if farmers need to look beyond local and regional labor pools (Findeis 2002). A farm's ability to fill its labor needs locally depends not only on the number of workers needed, but also on the tightness of the labor market (Findeis 2002). Higher local unemployment rates make more workers available for agricultural jobs.

If the local market cannot meet labor needs, farmers can turn to a variety of other potential solutions (Findeis 2002). The adoption of labor-saving technology can help decrease the number of workers needed to perform farm work. Offering higher wages and more benefits could be an effective means of attracting more local workers to agricultural work. Making working conditions and schedules more attractive could have a similar positive effect (Findeis 2002). Farmers may decide to turn to more marginal elements of society including immigrants and migrant workers. Policies that promote the in-migration of such workers might help to solve the farm labor shortage problem, but are likely to trigger other challenges in local communities (Denton 2002; Findeis 2002).

US agriculture has a long history of exploiting vulnerable populations for their labor (Fulton 1983; Pfeffer 1983). These workers have included native peoples, convicts, indentured servants, and African slaves (Fulton 1983). The employment of underprivileged individuals and various immigrant groups has continued through modern times as US agriculture has become more industrialized (Goldschmidt 1978; Mize 2006; Pfeffer 1983). Even for smaller-scale farms that are less industrialized, these groups represent important labor pools because of their social and economic vulnerability and associated flexibility (Mize 2006; Rodriguez 2004).

Farmers, as well as other employers who hire immigrant workers, play a role as “gatekeepers” to immigrants in the US labor market (Rodriguez 2004:453). Immigrants are likely to be attracted to low-wage jobs like those in agriculture for various reasons. They are often willing to work for low wages because of poor economic conditions in their home countries. The current capitalist labor market, however, also encourages their movement into these jobs (Rodriguez 2004). For employers, there are multiple advantages to hiring immigrant workers. Because immigrants often communicate and work through social networks and family relations, they offer employers what Rodriguez (2004) describes as a self-regulating, self-sustaining labor supply. These informal methods decrease the amount of time and effort an employer needs to spend on recruitment, training, supervision, and discipline (Rodriguez 2004). Workers from Latin America also offer US farmers spatial advantage (Rodriguez 2004), because their movement into the US is relatively quick and inexpensive. Finally, immigrant workers tend to have very little voice with regards to working conditions and wages. Many are restricted by their illegal status and are therefore easily exploited by employers (Mize 2006; Rodriguez 2004).

These are all clear advantages for farmers who employ large crews of workers, but even smaller-scale farmers employ immigrant workers. For smaller businesses with lesser labor requirements, immigrant laborers offer greater flexibility than local workers and often seek out informal employment arrangements (Rodriguez 2004). Both of these employment characteristics are convenient for smaller-scale farm operations with uncertain profits and limited capital.

While low wages and lack of benefits are often associated with agricultural labor, many farmers consider it an “unacceptable financial burden” (Shreck et al. 2006:445) to provide better wages and benefits for their workers. In their study of labor practices on California organic farms, Shreck et al. (2006) find that small farms are less likely than large farms to offer fringe benefits like health and dental insurance, paid vacation, and sick leave. This reluctance to offer benefits is often linked to the perception that farmers’ own incomes and benefits are fairly poor. And while many farmers are reluctant to provide more financial incentives for farm workers, some farm operators have demonstrated that financial investment in their workers can pay off in employees’ quality of work and willingness to return to the farm year after year (Shreck et al. 2006).

In the meantime, some farmers complain about the undependability of today’s agricultural laborers. In her study of Georgian farmers, Barlett (1993) found that farmers were often unhappy with the unreliability of their workers and the resulting costs they incurred on the farm business. Due to the careful timing and sequential nature of farming, workers who are not dependable can have a significant negative impact on a farm’s productivity. Smaller-scale farms, in particular, with fewer hired wage workers, suffer detrimental effects on production when their workers are absent during integral periods. In Barlett’s study, farmers said their hired workers put less care into their work. Less attention to detail and maintenance led to actual costs in crop damage and machine repair. Inefficiency and slowness were another common complaint among these farmers (Barlett 1993).

Because literature that deals specifically with small farm labor management is limited, it is beneficial to look beyond the agricultural arena to examine how other small

business owners interact with hired workers. In a study of British micro-businesses (businesses that employ fewer than 10 employees), Matlay (1999) found that business owners tend to prefer informal labor management practices. In general, the owners themselves were responsible for human resource decisions, while larger operators would hire personnel for those duties. In an effort to learn how these informal management strategies impacted employee relations, Matlay (1999) explores how business owners and employees feel about the arrangements regarding recruitment, training, pay bargaining, grievance procedures, and interpersonal work relationships. In most instances, although informal methods can lead to inefficiencies within the business, this style is preferred over more formal procedures that are associated with large firms.

As mentioned earlier, recruitment is a task that can demand a significant amount of time from farmers. Matlay (1999) finds that small business owners find labor recruitment to be burdensome, and they often locate workers through informal channels like family, friends, neighbors, associates, and other employees. Jobs that require special skills, however, might require more formal methods of recruitment. Training, too, is often dealt with informally, based the owner's personal observations and evaluations of employees' needs (Matlay 1999). As with farmers, time constraints, lack of training personnel, and the additional costs of specialized training represent barriers to providing thorough or up-to-date human resource development (Matlay 1999). Management of employees' wages is also handled informally where payment is often negotiated individually between the owner and employee. Some employers offer benefits like bonuses or alternative gifts on an informal basis. Complaints from employees and

owners' dissatisfaction are also dealt with in an informal manner, often with the intent of keeping work relations friendly (Matlay 1999).

The preference of both employers and workers for informal management styles is also linked to better interpersonal relationships at work (Matlay 1999). In these small businesses, the owner is often in daily contact with workers, so there is much opportunity for communication. An informal approach enhances the development of good work relationships, providing a more relaxed atmosphere for work and communication (Matlay 1999). This rosy picture of the small business workplace, of course, is not always easy or possible to achieve. This situation is described as the "small is beautiful" scenario (Wilkinson 1999:2), where a family atmosphere is present in the workplace, accompanied by high worker satisfaction, strong communication, great flexibility, and low levels of conflict.

The opposite kinds of working conditions are present in the "bleak house" scenario (Wilkinson 1999:2), where family-style management resembles a dictatorship, and hired employees do not feel comfortable communicating with or challenging the owner. The flexibility referred to above as a positive attribute of a job might also be perceived as job instability and insecurity. As Wilkinson (1999) suggests, most small business management arrangements are neither "small is beautiful" nor "bleak house," but rather contain elements of both. Specific approaches to labor management are likely to vary according to the particular structural conditions and social actors at play in a given business.

Newby's study of farm laborers delves deeper into the relationships between farm workers and between workers and their employers (Newby 1979). Although his study

takes place in England, many of Newby's findings regarding worker attitudes also relate to US farm labor contexts (Barlett 1986). His depiction of a patriarchal mode of labor control demonstrates the relationship advantages it has over a more bureaucratic approach to labor management. In a patriarchal system, farm workers tend to have more interaction and positive relationships with their employers. Work is seen as a common goal to be achieved through "teamwork" (Newby 1979:309). This sense of cooperation and harmony on the farm is reinforced by workers' descriptions of the workforce as a family or comparisons of their relationship with the farmer to marriage. This kind of relationship fosters loyalty toward the farmer and his family. Furthermore, workers involved in a family or team relationship are more likely to accept some of the more negative aspects of their working conditions. Some of Newby's subjects said they experienced "ups and downs" (Newby 1979:309) on the job, but overall, farmer-worker relationships were friendly. Others may have complained about low wages or poor working conditions but were understanding of the farmer's position and did not blame him for these inadequacies.

Newby explains how this kind of deference among workers is underpinned by other factors that lend legitimacy to the farmer's authority over them. These features reveal perceptions that workers have regarding their own work, skills, and rights, as well as those of their employer. First, workers tend to believe there is a natural inequality between employee and employer. This inequality manifests itself in the farmer's implicit authority in the workplace and in differences in wealth between workers and their employer (Newby 1979). There also tends to be a certain respect for the farmer's rights because of his ownership of property. Land ownership is perceived as a privilege, and

therefore, the farmer deserves more say than his workers in how work is performed on the land (Newby 1979). Related to this land-based authority, farm workers often recognize the superior skills and knowledge of the farmer and feel that they would not be able to operate the farm better (Newby 1979).

In general, the workers in Newby's study were not able to make an accurate estimation of their employer's personal income. Because of this lack of knowledge, workers were not certain of any potential drastic inequalities in income between worker and employer. Some were under the impression there was a large and unfair gap in income, while others felt the farmer, like themselves, was just scraping by. The latter opinion, that income distribution is relatively even or fair, resonates in the common notion that the individual farmer shows sincere personal concern for his workers and their well-being.

While some farm workers shared a sense of commitment and loyalty toward their employer, others viewed their relationship with the farmer as merely contractual (Newby 1979). So although some negative or apathetic perceptions exist among the farm workers in Newby's study, there appears to be a more positive idea that farm work is satisfying and workplace relationships are harmonious.

It is possible that farms of small and middle size are more flexible and more capable of meeting consumers' demand for a more socially just agriculture. Large farms tend to be linked to heavy use of wage labor and the negative aspects of industrialized farm work (Findeis 2002; Goldschmidt 1978). Laborers on large-scale, industrial farms are more likely to face problems in community integration, democratic involvement in the workplace, and future economic achievement (Findeis 2002). In contrast, smaller-

scale operations have more interpersonal controls that promote better working conditions and a more satisfied workforce (Newby 1979). Durkeim's notion of "size-effect" (Newby 1979:121) plays out in the modes of labor control on smaller farms as well as the greater job satisfaction of workers on smaller farms. The more content a worker is in his job, the more likely he is to identify himself with his work and show loyalty to his employer (Newby 1979).

In the next section, I examine research that has addressed the role social actors in the community might play in farmers' labor management decisions. I probe further into previous literature regarding the well-being of farm workers, as well as ways the local public might influence farmers' labor management styles.

Local community

As farmers interact with members of their local community, issues arise concerning the employment of local residents on the farm. In this section, I discuss how farmers deal with public perceptions of farming and farm work, as well as how they interact with workers from the local vicinity. Some, but not necessarily all hired employees reside within farmers' own communities. As farm operators share social interactions with neighbors, consumers, and other local residents, they are also aware of local employment opportunities and limitations.

Public perceptions of farm work and agricultural workers vary. Both negative and positive impressions exist. On the one hand, agricultural work is generally perceived to be an "unskilled" job, designated as a temporary job or a job for workers who lack the motivation or skills to advance in other careers (Raper and Forsyth 1943). Agricultural workers are often assigned low status and tend to be excluded from the affairs of the local

community (Raper and Forsyth 1943). Immigrants and other “marginal” members of society are perceived to make up most of the agricultural workforce, with foreign migrant workers performing much of the nation’s farm work (Findeis 2002). Migrant workers, in particular, are linked to a host of negative images. They are often seen as outsiders in local communities and can be vulnerable to racism (Denton 2002). Other negative perceptions of undocumented farm workers include the belief that they are taking jobs away from local workers and they consume tax-based resources and services (Dudley and Alexander 2009b). Migrant workers are also subject to a variety of inaccurate popular images that can, in turn, affect the way the general public and policy makers perceive their working conditions and needs (Gabbard et al. 2002).

On the other hand, recent research indicates that many US residents support the employment endeavors of immigrant and migrant workers. A survey of New York State residents reveals that the majority of respondents believe undocumented farm workers should be given temporary work permits or offered better access to legal citizenship (Dudley and Alexander 2009a). Furthermore, data regarding residents’ perceptions of social and economic contributions of undocumented farm workers indicate that the majority of respondents feel these workers have a positive influence in their host communities (Dudley and Alexander 2009b). These positive contributions include their participation in jobs local residents do not want; their role in providing needed labor and affordable food; their provision of “good work” (Dudley and Alexander 2009b:2); their contributions to the local economy; and their enrichment of community diversity and culture.

Negative public perceptions of farm work and the employment of farm workers can be contrasted with more positive experiences of farm workers themselves. Both Barlett (1986, 1993) and Newby (1979) demonstrate how full-time farm laborers adopt both positive and negative attitudes about their work and their employers. Positive perspectives are linked to agrarian ideals that are more often associated with the values of farm owners. Barlett's study (1993) reflects the opinions of farm workers who value the opportunity to work outdoors without constant supervision. Other sentiments reveal that farmers and farm workers equate agricultural work with a healthier way of life (Barlett 1993). Workers also express pride in their accomplishments and identify with farming as a way of life (Barlett 1989). Participants in the study contrast these feelings with their opinions of factory work, where they perceive less job satisfaction (Barlett 1989). In sum, these studies challenge common notions that farm work is undesirable and that the satisfaction of farm workers is low.

Some scholars argue that family farmers, when compared with larger-scale and more industrialized farm operators, have stronger ties with their local communities (Goldschmidt 1978; Heffernan and Lasley 1978). Research on farming communities indicates that family farmers know their neighbors well (Jackson-Smith and Gillespie 2005). Their higher level of civic engagement is characterized by frequent and informal interactions with other community members (Heffernan and Lasley 1978). These relationships with neighbors and other community members can be an asset for farmers when there is a seasonal need for short-term or part-time workers (Mooney 1988).

Particularly in rural communities dominated by smaller-scale farms, there is, or at least has been, a tendency for neighboring farmers to help each other with certain kinds

of farm work. Harper and Lyson's study (1995) of labor exchanges on dairy farms in the early to mid 1900s explores ideas and practices involving collective work on small family farms. Even as agricultural practices became more industrialized, labor reciprocity remained important to farmers (Harper and Lyson 1995). These labor exchanges not only served the practical purpose of getting larger-scale farm tasks accomplished, but also provided farmers and farm families with an informal venue for socializing (Harper and Lyson 1995; Schwartz 1992). The authors describe how male farmers developed strong social bonds and friendships during their shared work activities, while farm women enjoyed the social aspects of preparing large shared meals (Harper and Lyson 1995). This era of "changing works" came to an end after World War II with the increased adoption of agricultural technologies and a decreased supply of farm workers (Harper 2001). Although, the "neighborliness" (Harper 2001:264) between farmers may have declined since that era, there are potentially other informal labor exchanges cropping up in contemporary farming systems. Lyson (2004:61) suggests that a "new civic agriculture" that engages farmers and communities with each other is benefiting small-scale and family-owned farms by raising public awareness of their work. This growing interest in local agriculture may increase community members' formal and informal participation as consumers, advocates, and laborers.

The presence or absence of hired workers on family farms may have implications on the amount and kinds of interactions farmers have in their community. Harper (2000) suggests that growers who experience long hours and increased stress due to inadequate hired help also enjoy less free time for family and community activities and less interaction with neighbors for exchange of labor. It is also possible that hiring wage

employees can allow farmers sufficient free time for social activities and participation in formal and informal organizations and institutions (Jackson-Smith and Gillespie 2005). Off-farm employment of family members can also affect social relations among family farmers and their neighbors, as well as their level of involvement with community groups (Harper 2001). Off-farm jobs can expose family members to new social networks and increase their interactions with civic organizations (Jackson-Smith and Gillespie 2005). Off-farm employment, particularly when combined with farm responsibilities, can also create work overload and leave less time for civic engagement and informal social interaction (Danes and McTavish 1997; Schwartz 1992).

Regulatory organizations

Farmers are well known for their resistance to governmental regulation and intrusion from other regulatory agencies (Dudley 2003). This sense of resistance is linked to farmers' feelings of independence, self-reliance, and "being one's own boss" (Dudley 2003; Mooney 1988). It is also related to the idea that farming is different than other industries because of its biological characteristics and that farm businesses should be exempt from certain kinds of regulation. This agricultural exceptionalism can be contradictory, however, as even family farmers are deeply embedded in a capitalist market system and may benefit from state and federal agricultural, trade, and labor regulations (Dudley 2003; Getz et al. 2008; Mooney 1988).

For example, farm labor laws dating back to the Bracero Program of the World War II era have encouraged the exploitation of immigrant farm workers (Mize 2006). The massive movement of immigrant and migrant workers from Mexico that was spawned by this program is usually associated with large-scale producers. However,

Bracero and successive labor programs that were designed to facilitate the employment of international agricultural workers have also been integral in supplying workers on smaller farms and other employment sectors (Rodriguez 2004). Even if farmers or other types of employers are not directly recruiting workers through these programs, they often benefit from the abundant supply of seasonal and low-skilled workers the system enables (Rodriguez 2004).

There is much disagreement and debate regarding the existence of farm labor shortages, as well as the need for immigration reform (Kanel 2008; Levine 2007). Governmental regulations regarding these issues could have dramatic effects on the way both large- and small-scale farmers deal with labor management and the employment of immigrant and migrant workers. It is estimated that at least half of farm workers employed in US agriculture do not have the proper legal status to work here (Kanel 2008). Potential changes in immigration reform would allow more unauthorized workers to attain legal status (Kanel 2008). Such reform could decrease these workers' interest in seasonal jobs because of increased opportunities for more stable working conditions. This could greatly impact growers who depend on seasonal workers as they consider ways to adjust farming and management strategies (Kanel 2008). Alternatively, the legalization of more immigrant workers and their corresponding transition from seasonal to year-round work could result in a more stable local workforce for farmers and improved economic conditions for workers (Kanel 2008).

Some growers express resistance to rules and requirements designed by other regulatory agencies, such as specialized certification programs. This would include entities such as organic certification programs and the Good Agricultural Program

(GAP). GAP, a certification program designed for food safety by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), already has guidelines regarding farm workers. State and federal organic certifiers are considering the inclusion of social sustainability standards in their certification processes (Shreck et al. 2006). Shreck et al. (2006) found that even organic farmers, who are often viewed as having strong ideals regarding social justice issues, are resistant to the incorporation of social standards in certification requirements. Many farmers in the study feel that the costs associated with new labor regulations and requirements of benefits would be too expensive and threaten the economic viability of their farms (Shreck et al. 2006). Growers in the study cite other external forces for their resistance to additional financial burdens associated with farm labor regulations such as high workers compensation costs, international competition, and low product prices due to large corporate vendors.

The structural constraints associated with labor regulations, as well as other limitations relating to farm families, hired workers, and local communities create unique settings in which individual farm operators make various management decisions. Because of the essential human element of farm labor management, it is necessary for growers to examine structural conditions as well as their own beliefs and values while considering their labor options. The following section addresses theoretical considerations of structure and agency and how they relate to small farm operators' labor management decisions.

3. Theoretical Approach

The debate over the relative influence of structure and agency on human actions is a long-standing one in which many scholars have participated (Jary and Jary 1991; Wright and Middendorf 2008). The ongoing discussion revolves around the arguments that elements of social structure dictate the actions of individuals and groups, or that individuals employ agency and free will to construct and reconstruct their social worlds (Jary and Jary 1991). Most theoretical perspectives recognize the importance of both structure and agency and their interconnectedness (Jary and Jary 1991; Wright and Middendorf 2008). The following sections investigate theoretical works that address the roles of structure and agency in the sociology of agriculture. These literatures relate more specifically to the actions of small-scale farmers and the persistence of small farms.

A. Structure-oriented perspectives

Within the broader discipline of the sociology of agriculture, structural arguments are often made regarding the development of agricultural systems and, in turn, the labor processes involved in agricultural production. The political economy of agriculture, stemming from Marxian theory, has been a dominant perspective in the analysis of the capitalist development of agriculture and the persistence of small-scale and family farming within a capitalist structure (Buttel et al. 1990; Buttel 2001; Lobao and Meyer 2001). This view maintains that market competition favors large-scale farming systems while influencing the structure of smaller-scale operations. The result, it is argued, is the gradual transition of small farms that depend on family labor to a farm sector dominated

by large capitalist producers and semi-proletarianized producers (Lobao and Meyer 2001).

Despite these dire predictions from Marx, Kautsky and Lenin, small farms do persist, and a significant collection of literature has been dedicated to exploring the reasons for their survival. The use of farm labor is integral to some of these theoretical explorations. Mann and Dickinson (1978) expound upon Marx's "labor theory of value" that states that living labor produces surplus value. In other words, the value of goods is based on how much labor or labor time has been devoted to producing them. Labor in agriculture, however, is not continuous and does not make a significant contribution to the entire production process (Mann and Dickinson 1978). The seasonality of labor needs creates a gap between production time and labor time (Pfeffer 1983). Therefore, non-industrialized farming is not profitable for the capitalist and is instead performed by "petty commodity producers" or independent commodity producers. Mann and Dickinson (1978) describe Marx's notion of petty commodity production as "production for exchange which is fundamentally characterized by the unity of labor and capital" (467). In agricultural systems, this means farm family members tend to make up much of the labor force, and the farm family enterprise is able to exist alongside a capitalist system without being consumed by it (Mann and Dickinson 1978). The reduction of personal consumption and productive consumption, as well as increased participation in off-farm wage labor, represent ways farmers can adapt to market-related risks (Friedmann 1978). The latter options, however, can diminish the competitive position of individual farms and threaten the household as a unit of production (Friedmann 1978).

Mann and Dickinson (1978) describe subjective and objective factors that allow the family farm to persist in a capitalist economy. A subjective factor of the family farm lies in the family's social relations of production. The peculiar domestic relations that exist within farm families allow family members to contribute to the subsistence of the farm without achieving a minimum average rate of profit (Mann and Dickinson 1978). Family farms can adapt to uncertain profit rates by increasing the exploitation of unpaid family labor and decreasing household consumption (Friedmann 1978; Mann and Dickinson 1978; Simpson et al. 1988; Wenger and Buck 1988). An objective factor pertaining to small farm persistence is related to the modes of production employed on small farms. For example, improvements in technology increase labor productivity so that small farms are able to resist capitalist intrusion (Mann and Dickinson 1978).

The political economy of agriculture helps describe farmers' responses to structural constraints within a capitalist agricultural system where production is dominated by large-scale and industrialized farms. However, this perspective fails to recognize the important role that human agency and culture play in farmers' decisions and behaviors (Lobao and Meyer 2001). The political economy paradigm places strong emphasis on market-based production, granting little attention to other forms of production that may have important consumption-based or reproductive value (Lobao and Meyer 2001). In the next section, I will discuss alternative theoretical frameworks that address the role agency plays in the persistence of small farms and their labor processes.

B. Agency-oriented perspectives

Weberian-influenced theory on the persistence of small farms takes a different, agency-oriented approach to small farm survival. Bonanno (1987) highlights how some

farmers remain in farming because of non-economic reasons. Despite unfavorable market conditions, some small-scale operators continue their work because of the freedom and independence associated with farming. This perspective is demonstrated in the non-profit maximizing practices that farmers adopt over riskier profit-maximizing practices. This low-risk approach demonstrates farmers' tendency toward persistence rather than debt (Bonanno 1987; Dudley 2003).

Mooney (1988) further examines these perspectives on agency in small-scale agriculture in his discussion about Weber's concept of "rationalization." While making decisions and developing agricultural and management practices, farmers engage in a "process by which explicit, intellectually calculable rules and procedures are increasingly substituted for sentiment, tradition, and rule of thumb in all spheres of activity" (Wrong 1970:26). Weber distinguishes between two forms of rationality: formal and substantive rationality. While formal rationality results in profit- and efficiency-oriented decisions, substantive rationality is based on the value orientations of individual farmers (Mooney 1988). And although Weber argues that formal rationality ultimately leads to irrational decisions (decisions that may compromise key features of the farming lifestyle), it is arguable that agriculture, perhaps more than other sectors, provides unique opportunities for substantive rationality (Mooney 1988). These opportunities, however, are highly dependent on the relationship between this rationality and structural elements like class position (Mooney 1988).

This interaction between human agency and class structure is one example of many interactions that might influence farmers' decisions regarding their farming practices, lifestyles, and business management practices. These various relationships

between structure and agency must be taken into account when exploring farmers' labor management decisions and strategies. Next, I describe why an actor-oriented perspective is appropriate for examining my particular research questions.

B. An actor-oriented approach

Wright and Middendorf (2008) emphasize that structure and agency are deeply intertwined and that it is often difficult to dissociate one from the other. Even as the agricultural political economy approach suggests, structural constraints can influence how the agency of small farmers is manifested in real life decisions. Despite these constraints, however, actors within a capitalist agricultural system do resist certain structural pressures in order to preserve their own substantively rational choices. Local challenges and opportunities, influenced by broader structural conditions, help shape these choices (Jussaume and Kondoh 2008).

European scholars of the Wageningen School have developed a theory of agriculture that challenges what they believe to be the overly structural and deterministic agrarian political economy theory (Buttel 2001). Based on Norman Long's actor-oriented perspective, their approach suggests that "farmers are active, knowledgeable actors, and that accordingly they tend to develop diverse 'folk concepts' and 'farming styles' which enable them to reproduce their enterprises in the face of the homogenizing tendencies of advanced capitalism" (Buttel 2001:172). Long (2001) proposes an actor-oriented approach that places the farmer as a central social actor whose decisions and actions vary according to diverse structural and social influences.

Although Long's work is based in development sociology and social change, the actor-oriented approach is well suited to the study of farm labor issues with an emphasis

on farm operators and their management styles. Long's focus on actors' various responses to internal and external factors stresses that "farmers are not simply to be seen as passive recipients, but as actively strategizing in terms of their own projects and interacting with outside institutions and personnel" (Long 2001:44). For example, this view acknowledges that farmers' decisions are influenced not only by structural factors like market conditions, but also other elements of farming related to farm development and family (Long 2001). Furthermore, farmers must consider their interactions with various actors in order to accomplish their own particular goals or "actor projects" (Long 2008:81). Long describes how these goals are related to farmers' own values, as well as their interaction with other social actors:

Such 'projects' are grounded in and/or reflect or translate specific sets of interests, commitments, and prospects. A decisive element concerns the organization and information-processing capacities associated with particular projects for realizing or creatively transforming visions of the future and enrolling others in their specific projects. Understanding the contents of actor projects and how they interlock requires an analysis of the processes of negotiation, confrontation, and accommodation entailed in the various processes of mediation that take place between prospective network members. (Long 2008:81)

Indeed, many factors impact farmers' decisions regarding their farm and business management. While some of these influences are linked to very large global structures (like capitalism), others are manifested in the social, environmental, and economic characteristics of a particular locality (Jussaume and Kondoh 2008). For small farmers, especially, these diverse local factors can play a major role in their management strategies. An actor-oriented perspective that considers various structural factors and social actors is useful for examining how these elements impact decisions made on the farm. In this study of Pennsylvania farmers' labor management strategies, many factors

become part of the decision-making process including farm and business histories; local soil and weather conditions; proximity to urban markets; local and extra-local competition; rules and regulations; farm and family size; level of mechanization; community ties and social networks; local labor supply; consumer relations; and more. The farmers themselves are integral actors in these scenarios, enacting their own agency in response to interactions with these variables. An actor-oriented perspective can adequately incorporate these diverse influencing factors into an analysis of how and why farmers make certain labor management decisions.² Integral to this approach is the awareness that understanding human action “is the process of learning from actors the features of their actions (what they are doing) and the motivations behind their actions (why they are doing it)” (Bonanno and Constance 2008:37). These broad theoretical goals help shape the empirical objectives of my research.

4. Conclusion

In summary, and as an analysis of farmer interviews will help demonstrate, small and mid-sized farm operators are exposed to a number of social and structural influences when making labor management decisions on the farm. Individual farmers are likely to encounter different structural limitations, as well as various social actors that ultimately shape the way they express their own agency in their decisions and actions. A review of the literature has been useful in exploring some of the factors involved in agricultural

² It is worth noting why I have not chosen to approach this topic through the similar and widely used theoretical lens of actor network theory (ANT). I justify this decision because of the narrow scope of this study. My objective is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of farmers. It is beyond the scope of my analysis to address factors that influence other major players in the complex web of actors involved in farm labor issues. Furthermore, ANT analyses often encompass actor connections at a global scale that is not appropriate for this local-level study. For these reasons, an actor-oriented perspective, rather than actor network theory, is well suited to my research goals.

labor decisions and practices. Citing an actor-oriented theoretical approach, I have begun to examine how farmers respond to the influences of family, hired workers, local communities, and regulatory organizations when making decisions about how to manage their farm labor force.

The conceptual framework presented in this chapter, as well as the methodological framework I describe in the next chapter, serve to bolster key findings and analyses in Chapter 4. In that chapter, I will revisit the actor-oriented approach and its application to my research problem, as well as the four key social actors that are linked to farmers' labor management decisions.

CHAPTER 3:

Research Methods

1. Introduction of chapter

This study is well suited to qualitative research methods because it is exploratory in nature. Little sociological research has been published regarding small and mid-sized farm operators and their dealings with farm workers. A qualitative approach is appropriate for identifying major issues that concern farmers in their labor management plans. An interview-based inquiry can provide a better understanding of individual farmers' experiences with hired labor and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. A combination of phenomenological and ethnographic methodologies was used in this study in an effort to capture *experiences* and *meanings*, as well as labor management *practices* (Creswell 2007).

In this chapter, I describe methods that were employed during each step of the research process including sampling, data gathering, and data analysis. I begin by detailing the sampling process used to locate the 15 farms and 20 respondents in the final sample. Next, I describe the area of the study and the characteristics of the sample. This is followed by descriptions of methods used for data collection and analysis. I then discuss ethical issues that arose during the research process, as well as issues of trustworthiness. After discussing methodological limitations of the study, I close the chapter with a summary of important points regarding the research methods used in this study.

2. Research sample

A. Sampling techniques

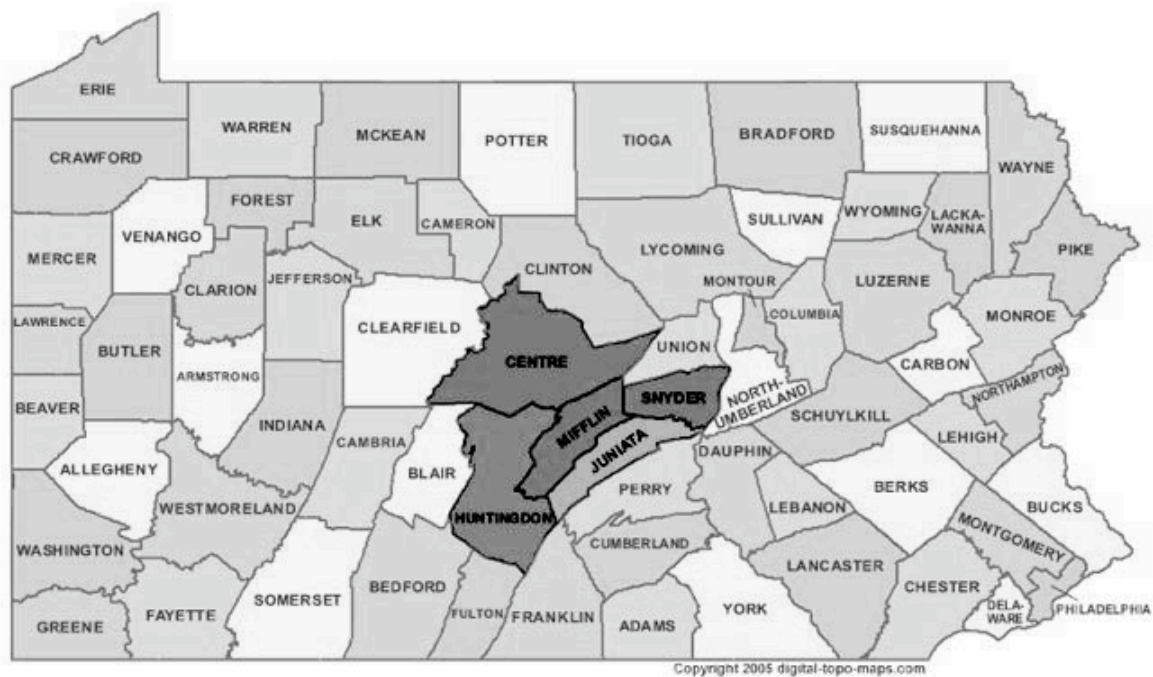
As an exploratory investigation with a narrow focus, this study is not designed to make generalizations about a large population of farmers or their labor management practices. Instead, this research is designed to capture how individuals who operate a specific kind of farm perceive and experience labor issues. Therefore, it is important to gather data from individuals who can offer detailed information about the particular research problem (Merriam 2002). A “purposeful” sampling technique is required to secure such “information-rich” data sources (Patton 1990:169).

A first step in purposive sampling determines the criteria by which participants are to be chosen (Merriam 2002). I used four main criteria for selecting farmers for the interview component of the research: 1) location; 2) farm size; 3) commodity; and 4) number of hired workers. The selection or elimination of farmers was based on information gathered through initial contacts by email or telephone with potential participants.

First, it was desirable that all participants’ farms were located in central Pennsylvania. Seeking out farms within Centre County and surrounding counties was appropriate because of limited travel funds and a narrow window of time available for conducting interviews with farmers. Furthermore, fruit and vegetable farms in central Pennsylvania tend to be of small or moderate size. Larger horticultural operations are located in other parts of the state including Adams and Lancaster counties of southeastern Pennsylvania. To limit the time and money spent traveling to interview sites, I compiled a list of potential participant farms within a two-hour driving distance from State College,

Pennsylvania. The farmers in the final sample reside and work in five counties: Centre, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin and Snyder Counties (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Map of five-county sample area



Source: *Digital-Topo-Maps.com, Pennsylvania County Map, adapted by author*
<http://www.digital-topo-maps.com/county-map/pennsylvania.shtml> (Retrieved October 25, 2010)

As stated earlier, my research focuses on the labor concerns of small and mid-sized farm operators. As discussed in Chapter 1, the categorization of farms by scale can be highly problematic. Because there is a lack of consensus regarding farm size definitions, I developed both general and more specific criteria for determining whether farms qualified as small or mid-sized. Growers were asked questions about the size of their farms in terms of acreage, farm products, and labor needs. The combination of these farm descriptors was sufficient for eliminating any larger scale farms from the sample.

The seasonality of labor needs poses particular challenges for farmers, so the second criterion hinged on the requirement that all farms in the sample are highly seasonal in their production. Therefore, farmers who rely heavily on meat or dairy production for their income were not approached for the study. Sample selection focused instead on fruit and vegetable growers, orchard operators, and to a lesser extent, greenhouse operators. Due to my own experience and knowledge about these different farm types, I understood that labor needs would be quite diverse among them but consistently seasonal. By broadening the scope of the research to include these three groups of farm operations, I was able to limit the area of my sample to counties in central Pennsylvania while considering the labor issues in a larger variety of farming contexts. Again, information about farmers' primary commodities was gathered during the initial contact phase of the selection process.

Whether a farm employed organic or conventional farming practices was a concern in the sampling process, but this aspect of production was not explicitly defined in developing the research sample. Farms were not purposefully selected or eliminated because of their organic or non-organic status. However, I was mindful of the research value of including both types of producers in the sample and made a conscious effort to contact both types of growers.

The final criterion for selecting participant farmers was based on the employment and number of hired, non-family workers. Farm families that were able to operate without any outside hired help were eliminated from the sample. Interview participants were required to have hired at least one and not more than 25 workers at any one point in the production cycle of their farms. The upper limit of 25 workers was chosen to

accommodate the larger number of seasonal pickers needed to harvest apples on mid-sized orchard operations. In some cases, the total number of employees also includes workers with job positions related to packing and sales. These numbers were chosen to capture a broad range of labor arrangements while preserving the small-scale and mid-sized aspect of the study's research objectives.

B. Contacting participants

Once the sampling criteria were developed, a list of potential participant farmers was created. Farms were located using a variety of search techniques. My own knowledge of area farms was useful in beginning a contact list. I also inquired informally of Penn State colleagues who have knowledge of growers in Centre County. In order to expand the list, I accessed names of farms through online resources including several online farmers' market lists and websites for the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association (PVGA) and the Tuscarora Organic Growers (TOG). A consumers' guide to area farm markets (PDA 2007) was particularly useful in identifying fruit and vegetable growers outside of Centre County. Finally, snowball sampling was used to contact growers. During initial communications with contacted farmers, I asked if they would recommend other fruit or vegetable growers that might be interested in the study. Several names were acquired using this method.

It was my objective to secure between 12 and 20 interview participants for the study. I began contacting farmers by mail and/or email as soon as I had compiled a list of 15 growers within the study area. As I was following up on these initial contacts, I continued adding names to the list through the methods outlined above, ending with a final contact list of 37 farmers. I was able to reach 36 of these growers and eventually

spoke directly with 35 of them. In the initial contact letters and emails, I introduced myself as the researcher, my research topic, and my reasons for contacting them for the study. A copy of the contact letter is found in Appendix A of this thesis. I informed them that I would contact them by telephone about a week after the post-marked date to discuss the study further.

I contacted 17 farmers by email, and this method of communication allowed them to respond quickly about the request. A few farmers expressed interest in participating or answered with an explanation of why they would not qualify for the study. Most of these emailed individuals waited until I telephoned them to respond about the request for an interview. For the remainder of farmers on the list, I sent out 17 letters by mail and made three telephone calls. I opted to call farmers' directly for whom I could not locate an email or mailing address and farmers who I contacted very late in the selection process. I was unable to reach one grower by any form of communication, apparently because she no longer uses the address or telephone number that I had found. I was unable to speak to another grower after several attempts to reach him by telephone.

Initial email and mail communications were followed by telephone calls through which I was able to give farmers a more detailed description of the research topic and objectives. I loosely followed a script that had been approved by the Penn State Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B) and explained my personal interest in farm labor issues and how my own family's farm labor concerns inspired my interest in the topic. During these telephone conversations, some farmers expressed that they would not participate in the study. Some did not fit the study's criteria because they did not hire non-family workers. In fact, 14 of the 35 farmers I contacted relied almost exclusively

on family labor. Others said they were too busy to participate in the interview. Others were no longer actively involved in farming. By the end of this process, a total of 15 farmers agreed to participate in the study and scheduled interviews within one or two weeks of the follow-up telephone call.

C. Sample characteristics

The final sample of fruit and vegetable growers is diverse with regards to their farm businesses, agricultural practices, farm sizes, and numbers of hired workers. This section describes some of the characteristics of the 15 farmers in the sample. These data were gathered from interviews and questionnaires that were distributed to participants after their interviews (see Appendix C). The content of these questionnaires and the methods used to design and distribute them are discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

Tables 3.1-3.5 present some defining characteristics of the sample. Table 3.1 shows that 13 of the 15 farms are engaged in vegetable and/or fruit production as their primary enterprise. One farm derives most of its income from its greenhouse operation with a lesser proportion of its sales coming from the direct marketing of vegetables. One grower's farm business is more highly diversified, where vegetable sales account for about 15 percent of the gross farm income, and other diversified and value-added products make up the remainder. Seven of the sample farms are certified organic. The growers who responded that vegetable or fruit production comprised a significant portion of their farm income estimated that between 60 percent and 100 percent of their farms' profits came from these labor-intensive activities.

Table 3.1: Production forms and characteristics of sample farms	
	Number of Farms (N=15)
Vegetables and small fruits	9
Orchard fruit	4
Greenhouse/nursery	1
Highly diversified	1
Certified Organic	7

Information about growers’ marketing venues was obtained in interviews, rather than through questionnaires. Table 3.2 illustrates the different market outlets participant farmers use to sell their produce and the number of growers who utilize each type of outlet. These numbers demonstrate that growers use both direct and wholesale marketing to distribute their goods. Farmers markets represent a major marketing venue for growers in the sample. Some growers, particularly those whose farms are isolated from large population centers, travel significant distances for farmers markets in metropolitan areas like Harrisburg or Washington, D.C. Other growers sell their products in smaller towns or cities where there is sufficient interest in fresh, local produce. Those who depend heavily on farmers’ markets for revenue tend to sell at more than one market, several days per week. Some of the city markets operate year-round and allow growers to sell their produce throughout the winter. Wholesale marketing venues include growers’ cooperatives, supermarket chains, packing facilities that sell to supermarkets, and produce auctions. Some growers depend heavily on wholesale markets for income, while others only sell surplus produce through these avenues.

Table 3.2: Sample farms categorized by marketing outlets	
	Number of farms (N=15)
Farmers market	10
Wholesale market	10
On-farm market	7
CSA ³	5
U-pick	2
Online sales	1

Table 3.3 illustrates additional characteristics regarding farm size and growers' experience with agriculture. As the figures indicate, the sample covers a wide range of farm acreages that are owned and rented by participant farmers (5.5 to 405 acres). Of these total acres, however, a narrower range represents the acreage that supports fruit and vegetable production (3 to 164 acres). It is important to note that on farms with larger cultivated acreages, a significant proportion of those acres are comprised of orchards. For example, the largest farm in the sample grows tree fruit on 50 of its 164 production acres. Growers' level of experience was determined by asking how many years they have been farming. Again, the growers in the sample exhibit a wide range of farming experience, ranging from four to 53 years. The average number of years farming is 28. During the interview process, it became evident that several of the growers did not begin farming until their adult years.

³ For a brief definition of Community Supported Agriculture, I turn to an agricultural extension program website: "CSA is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters which provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food. Supporters cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. CSA members make a commitment to support the farm throughout the season, and assume the costs, risks and bounty of growing food along with the farmer or grower." (Roth 2009)

Table 3.3: Characteristics of sample farms and operators				
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Total Acres	5.5	405	117	85
Production Acres	3	164	42.5	15.8
Years Farming	4	53	28	25

Table 3.4 uses gross farm income to help illustrate the relative size and productivity of the farms in the sample. According to the USDA’s guidelines for determining farm size, only two of these farms would be categorized as small farms because their gross sales do not exceed the \$50,000 limit (USDA 2005). As discussed in Chapter 1, the USDA’s definitions of small and large farms are problematic. Gross farm income does not account for the diversity of income-generating activities, the scale of actual crop cultivation, or the amount of labor required to accomplish agricultural tasks. Using the National Commission on Small Farms classification system, most sample farms are considered small businesses because their annual gross sales total less than \$250,000 (USDA 2005). Six farm operators indicated their businesses gross \$250,000 or more, but it is not clear how much of this income is derived directly from actual on-farm production. Several operators also participate in the resale of other growers’ products. For the purpose of this study, the larger operations in the sample are regarded as mid-sized farms. All participant farms meet the study’s criteria of employing 25 or fewer hired workers.

Table 3.4: Sample farms categorized by gross farm income	
Income Category	Number of farms (N = 15)
\$25,000-\$49,999	2
\$50,000-\$99,999	2
\$100,000-\$249,999	5
\$250,000-\$499,999	1
\$500,000 or more	5

Table 3.5 illustrates the highly seasonal and part-time nature of employment on participant farms, as well as the diversity of worker types growers draw from to fill their labor needs. Many farm workers on sample farms are hired on a part-time or seasonal basis. Eleven of the farms employ family members as part of their workforces in addition to hired workers.

Table 3.5: Employment of farm worker types on sample farms		
Type of farm workers employed	Number of farms (N = 15)	Total number of workers
Full-time hired, year-round	7	25
Full-time hired, seasonal	7	57
Part-time hired, year-round	5	14
Part-time hired, seasonal	9	61
Family members	11	20

3. Data collection

A. Interviews

This study draws primarily from data gathered through interviews. Weiss (1994) suggests that in-depth interviews are useful for integrating multiple perspectives of an issue or event. A well-conducted interview yields “thick description” of an individual’s

lived experience (Denzin 1989). In this research, I use semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to elicit this sort of rich description from farmers who have experienced labor management challenges.

Kvale (1996) describes how, unlike more academic or abstract research questions, interview questions must be easily understood by respondents. The author also demonstrates how several interview questions may be used to address a single, broader research question. Before conducting the interviews, I developed an interview guide that would capture key concepts and information from participants that ultimately help address the study's two main research questions. The final interview guide contains 14 open-ended questions that were designed to elicit spontaneous and rich descriptions (see Appendix D). According to Kvale's recommendations (Kvale 1996), the interview guide starts with a briefing about the purpose of the study and ends with a question that allows respondents to speak about topics or details we had not already discussed in the interview.

I did not conduct a pilot test of the interview guide. Instead, I asked three members of my own family to read the questions and inform me if there were any aspects of the guide that were unclear or awkward. All three family members have had years of experience with hired farm employees. As a result of their readings of the guide, I made several changes to the interview questions to accommodate their input.

Interviews took place at the homes or business offices of participants. These settings were both convenient and comfortable for respondents. In most cases, I interviewed only one person, the principal farm operator, per interview. For five interviews, both members of a husband and wife team participated in the interview.

Interview length ranged from approximately one to two hours. Once approval to record was granted from respondents, all interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and later transcribed verbatim.

Throughout this thesis, when quotations are used from farm interviews, I try to accurately represent the actual words of participants. In some cases, however, I omit irrelevant phrases or particularly untidy speech for the purpose of being clear and concise (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). In these instances, omitted words or phrases are indicated with ellipses within the quotation. For each quotation, a farm number in parentheses, rather than a pseudonym, identifies participants. For interviews where a husband and wife team was present, I indicate which respondent was speaking. I note “husband” or “wife” either before their respective phrases in a quotation where both speakers are represented, or after the farm number if only one participant is quoted (ex: Farm 5, wife).

B. Questionnaires

I designed a questionnaire to capture specific background information that was quantitative or objective in nature. Responses to the 13 questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix C) summarize descriptive aspects regarding the individual farms including acreage, gross farm income, agricultural practices, level of diversity, number and type of workers, percentage of income from farming, and off-farm income. These data are important for categorizing farms and setting the contexts in which the interview data is embedded.

Questionnaires were distributed after the completion of the interviews. After a brief description of the purpose of the questionnaire, I gave each participant a copy with an addressed and stamped envelope. I explained how to fill out the form and that the

questionnaire could be completed and returned to me at their convenience. Each questionnaire was designated a farm number that corresponded to the same number on other raw data documents including interview notes, digital recording files, transcripts, and field notes.

C. Field notes

Immediately following each interview, I recorded additional comments about the interview, the interview situation, the farm location, or other aspects of the interview or respondent that I found noteworthy. Once I had access to a computer, I used these comments, as well as my recollection of the recent interview experience, to compile a set of field notes for each interview.

These field notes comprise a relatively small component of the data, yet they were useful in the research process in several respects. First, some comments led to the improvement and fine-tuning of interview questions. By noting the relative success or shortcomings of different interview approaches, I was able to adjust my questioning techniques in subsequent interviews. Second, the field notes provide descriptive data that are not apparent in the interviews. For example, for each interview, I recounted a detailed description of the farm, structures on the property, the participant's clothing, and other people whom I met or saw during the interview. Finally, the field notes marked the beginning of the analytical process. Some notes documented themes that were beginning to emerge from the interviews well before more deliberate analysis methods were used.

4. Data analysis

Qualitative analysis is by nature an inductive process in which the researcher interprets the perspectives and experiences of particular individuals within their particular contexts (Merriam 2008). The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and as such, is responsible for being as systematic as possible in order to accurately represent the meanings participants ascribe to their perspectives and lived experiences (Merriam 2008). In this section, I describe the steps that were taken to ensure a high level of credibility in my analysis of qualitative data.

A. Simultaneous data collection and analysis

Qualitative data analysis occurs simultaneously with data collection (Merriam 2008). This means that the researcher begins her analysis as data is being collected through interviews, observations, and document readings. This approach is important for identifying emergent themes, shaping theoretical viewpoints, linking concepts to previous literature, and defining categories for the coding process. Soon after I began conducting farmer interviews, I started to keep track of the analytic process through memos. Memo-writing provides a forum for reflecting about various methodological, theoretical, and analytic issues (Bodgen and Biklen 2007). These memos serve as a record of my own thoughts regarding my interpretations of emergent themes and key concepts in the data. Throughout the remainder of the analysis process, I continued to consult these memos and create new ones. Some of the ideas that I expressed in these memos remained relevant through the entire analytic process, while others became less important as I progressed through the coding and interpretation stages of the analysis.

B. Initial readings

Before I began to code interview data, I first read through all 15 interviews to get a general sense of important and reoccurring themes. This exercise allowed me to recall what was said in each of the interviews weeks after they were conducted. I noted key themes and concepts throughout the initial readings. These notes would later inform the development of categories for coding. During these initial readings of interviews, I began developing codes that I saw emerging from the interview data, previous literature, and my own observations from the field.

C. Coding

The coding process itself is a highly interpretive act (Saldana 2009). Codes are employed in qualitative data analysis to summarize, condense, and reduce data (Atkinson 1996; Saldana 2009), and can also be useful in complicating and expanding the data (Atkinson 1996). This is why qualitative data analysis requires multiple readings of interviews, as well as multiple stages of coding (Atkinson 1999; Creswell 1996; Saldana 2009). The first cycle of coding took place during my initial readings of farmer interviews. These codes were designed to identify patterns that I observed in the data. This relatively large number of coding categories represented participants' sentiments and experiences that were expressed repeatedly, either by the same individual or by more than one farmer. This first pass at coding also loosely incorporated categories related to my two main research questions regarding farm labor practices and growers' perceptions and experiences with labor issues. In sum, this first coding cycle represents what Maxwell calls "organizational coding" (Maxwell 2005:97) and serves to identify broad themes and categories to be sorted and analyzed later in the process.

During the second cycle of coding, I returned to my main research questions and my conceptual framework to identify new categories and subcategories. I created two broad categories with several subthemes related to farm labor practices and growers' responses to various key social actors in labor relations. These "practices" and "actors" categories and the subcategories within them represent what Maxwell calls "substantive codes" (Maxwell 2005:97), which are more descriptive in nature but do not yet address the development of theory or the creation of relationships between themes. In the second round of coding, I used track changes in electronic versions of interview transcripts to highlight and label coded phrases and passages. I later copied and pasted these excerpts into a separate document for each coded category and subcategory.

A third cycle of coding was necessary to address theoretical issues and relationships between themes. This kind of coding, which Maxwell refers to as "theoretical coding" (Maxwell 2005:97), tends to represent the researcher's own categorization of data, rather than that of research participants. In this phase of coding, I used previous literature and theoretical approaches to organize and collapse existing categories. I used previous codes to fill out larger analytic categories that address farmers' management styles and responses to challenges. This process of coding and recoding is valuable for identifying important and recurrent themes and linking these themes to previous literature and theory. These steps precede and inform the important next step of identifying and interpreting key findings.

D. Identification and interpretation of findings

The interpretation of coded data involves manipulating and exploring various codes and categories to identify salient findings (Atkinson 1996). Part of this process

involves deciding what is significant and meaningful data (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). Findings should be presented as objectively as possible, supported with participants' quotations, and well organized (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008).

To identify key findings, I revisited my coding categories and the excerpts under each category and subcategory. I then created an outline to help sort through important aspects of the data, paying special attention to include information pertaining directly or indirectly to my main research questions and my emerging conceptual framework. Over a period of several days, I added to and reorganized this outline in an effort to summarize important findings without being too repetitive. I noted examples and quotations that would help support my findings. Finally, I wrote a draft in which I identified and interpreted findings in an organized manner. This outline and draft would be useful in the following step of the analytic process where I further analyze relationships between major themes and findings.

E. Analysis of findings

After summarizing and organizing important findings, I was able to step back from the data, re-evaluate key themes, and search for deeper meanings in what I had found. This part of qualitative analysis involves comparing themes within and across cases and groups and comparing findings with those of other studies (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). This involves looking beyond categories and themes to examine more closely the relationships between themes and their linkages to previous literature and theory (Bazeley 2007).

For this part of the analysis, I employed a more manual method for examining important themes and relationship between them. I printed a summary outline of the key

findings I identified through the process of coding and categorizing data. After reading through the categorized lists of findings, I identified major themes that linked different groups of findings. I then narrowed these major themes and developed a detailed description of each of them in a separate document. Drawing from these descriptions, I returned to the findings outline to color code findings statements with one color representing each major linking theme, marked in the margins of the outline. Finally, using the color-coded outline to guide my analysis, I elaborated on these major themes by discussing their meanings and the meanings of the relationships between them.

5. Ethical Issues

An important element of all research, including qualitative approaches, involves the protection of human subjects. This study meets the requirements of the Pennsylvania State University's Office of Research Protections Institutional Review Board (IRB). All materials designed to solicit information from respondents including the contact script, interview guide, and questionnaire received human subjects approval and were deemed to pose no significant harm to study participants.

Furthermore, all participant farmers received an implied consent form that informed them of the study's purpose, the methods of data collection, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality (see Appendix E). They were also informed of their volunteer status and their right to decline answering interview questions. All participants read the consent form immediately before their interviews and were welcomed to keep it so that they understood their rights and protections. All research-related records and data were stored securely so that only the primary researcher had access to these materials.

6. Trustworthiness of the research process

During the research process, from the conception of the study to the interpretation of findings, I was cognizant of issues of trustworthiness regarding my research methods (Merriam 2002). The goal of qualitative research is to provide an analysis that accurately represents the reality of the situations and individuals that are being studied (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). This section addresses my own personal experience with the research and details the measures I took to ensure a high degree of credibility, dependability, and transferability in the research.

A. Researcher perspectives

As I addressed in the preface of this thesis, I do have personal experience with the research topic. My family's farm and their experiences with farm labor management have directly influenced my interest in this research. Furthermore, my experiences on the farm have been beneficial in several stages of the research process. My familiarity with the topic and ability to relate to participants' own experiences allowed me entrée into this group of farmers. My knowledge of the subject matter helped shape my research purpose and main research objectives. During the interview situation, my familiarity with agricultural practices and vernacular allowed for a more conversational flow without excessive interruptions for clarification or explanation.

On the other hand, I have found it challenging to totally separate my own family's experiences from the stories of participant farmers. During the coding and analysis processes, I had to be particularly cautious about where and when I placed emphasis on certain sentiments, perspectives, and experiences that participant growers expressed. I was careful to question why I had focused on certain findings, and how similar they were

to my own feelings on different topics. I made a conscious effort to be as objective as possible and fair to the meanings participants ascribed to their experiences and actions. This was a challenging task, but I believe my conscientiousness about this matter has helped shape a thoughtful analysis of interview data. Also, in writing, I had to be aware of aspects of this topic that I take for granted but are not necessarily common knowledge. Therefore, I have tried to describe my research methods and findings as clearly as possible.

B. Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research parallels the standard of validity in quantitative studies. This criterion requires that findings accurately reflect what participants “think, feel and do” (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008:77). In order to achieve a high level of credibility, the researcher must begin by ruling out possible validity threats (Maxwell 2005) by addressing issues that might compromise the accuracy of research findings.

Researcher bias is unavoidable in research (Maxwell 2005). Although the researcher always enters a study with previous theories, attitudes and experiences regarding her research topic, she can minimize the influence these biases have on findings by being aware of them throughout the research process and being open about them with readers (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008; Maxwell 2005). My prior personal experiences with farm labor issues inspired me to explore this topic academically. These personal perceptions, as well as the influence of existing literature on my understanding of these issues, are reflected in the interviews I conducted with participant farmers. Questions within the interview guide and questions and comments that surfaced during the actual interviews were at least partially shaped by these biases. In order to address

their influence on the research findings and minimize their negative effect on conclusions, I kept records of my own thoughts and reactions throughout the research process. These records are in the form of memos and reflective field notes.

Another way of strengthening credibility is by spending adequate time in field. This fosters a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). I accomplished this by conducting in-depth interviews at the homes and farms of participant growers. The one- to two-hour length of the interviews allowed me a considerable amount of time to speak with participants and understand their perspectives on farm labor issues. Although more in-depth ethnographic studies might warrant more and longer interview sessions, the length of this study's farmer interviews is appropriate given the exploratory nature and narrow scope of the research. Even though the interviews were largely conducted off-season, during months of less farm activity, the farm visits allowed me to get a better sense of the farm operations and the local factors that might influence business and farm labor management. After each interview, I compiled field notes that detailed information about the farm visit, the locality of the farm, and impressions about the farmer being interviewed. Furthermore, by conducting multiple interviews, I was able to increase the total amount of time I spent in the field and the variety of farm labor situations I encountered.

This variety of situations and participants represents another way to enhance the credibility of qualitative research. By using multiple sources of data (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008) and studying a diverse range of individuals (Maxwell 2005), I can more confidently claim that my findings are credible. I was conscious of this issue when I established my sample. The final sample, therefore, is comprised of farm operators

whose farm characteristics and labor needs are varied. As a result, the 15 interviews reflect a wide diversity of perspectives, given the study's narrow focus.

An additional method for increasing the credibility of qualitative research is to report negative cases and discrepant findings (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008; Maxwell 2005). These include participants' perspectives or research findings that contradict the researcher's own assumptions as well as assumptions based on previous literature and theory. Therefore, I include any potentially contradicting data and negative cases in my report.

The accuracy and richness of data representation are also essential for reporting credible research findings. For this reason, it is recommended that interviews be transcribed verbatim (Maxwell 2005). An assistant and I transcribed all 15 interviews verbatim and were mindful of including all significant pauses and expressions of hesitation. To be sure that my assistant's transcriptions were compatible to my own transcribing style, I checked several of them for accuracy while listening to the original interview recordings.

C. Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research. This refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated or "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam 2002:27). In qualitative research, it is not necessary that other researchers can replicate results, but other researchers must be able to agree that results make sense given the study's data (Merriam 2002).

To facilitate an understanding of how the research process unfolded, I maintained detailed notes about my methods in the form of field notes, memos, and a thesis notebook. Known as an audit trail, these various forms of notes provide step-by-step documentation of the research process (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008; Merriam 2002) including formation of research questions, literature review and theory development, sample selection, data gathering methods, and data analysis methods. Much of this material is outlined in this chapter.

Triangulation of methods is also used to lend dependability to qualitative research studies (Merriam 2002). For this project, although much of the analysis draws on interview data, farm visits and written questionnaires are used to bolster the trustworthiness of findings.

D. Transferability

Qualitative research findings are not meant to be generalizable to larger populations or all settings. The study's findings, however, can provide useful information for individuals or groups in similar situations. Transferability refers to whether a study is described well enough so that readers may decide if findings apply to their own settings and communities (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). The transferability of findings from this research is supported with rich descriptions from interview and field data, as well as detailed background information about individual farms. Also, by maximizing the variation of sites and participants, results can be applied to a wider variety of research situations (Merriam 2002).

7. Limitations

Despite my efforts to address issues of trustworthiness in my research design, there remain limitations due to the qualitative nature of the study, the small scale of the inquiry, and my own limited experience conducting qualitative research. In this section, I acknowledge the shortcomings of this research so that readers may understand that the study is situated in a specific context with particular limitations (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008).

First, this study is limited because of its exploratory nature and small size. This is largely due to the paucity of previous scholarly work on the specific topic of labor management issues on small farms. Because of this gap in the literature, there were few empirical studies to inform my own research design. Further, the small sample size limits the depth and variety of participant accounts regarding farm labor issues. Rich description derived from in-depth interviews is used to compensate for any weaknesses posed by the relatively small sample.

I have already addressed the threat of researcher bias and the steps I have taken to minimize its influence on findings. During the transcribing and coding, however, it became clear that some of my own experiences and perceptions of farm labor issues influenced the direction of some interviews. Although I was mindful of how these views might influence the tone and direction of interviews, I realize that my own opinions were occasionally inserted in the interview situations. I have noted this observation in field notes and memos, as well as in this section of my thesis.

It is also important to remind readers that this study is the first complete qualitative study conducted by the researcher. Because of my limited experience with

qualitative research interviewing techniques, there were some missed opportunities for follow-up questions or potentially fruitful directions of questioning. Although it is recommended that the qualitative researcher retains a clear distinction between interviewer and respondent (Weiss 1998), there were certainly parts of my own interviews that were more conversational in nature.

A final weakness of this study is the relatively few methods used for gathering data. There is a heavy reliance on interview data in this research. It would have been desirable to incorporate participant observation into the research design. However because of time constraints and seasonal considerations, this was not feasible.

8. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology used in this study that investigates the experiences, perceptions and practices of small-scale farmers as they cope with labor management issues. Purposive sampling techniques were used to locate information-rich participants for the study. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were the main source of qualitative data, while questionnaires were used to gather more objective background information. Field notes provide additional data regarding the individual farms and growers in the sample.

I have also discussed methods that were used to analyze research data in order to explore the meanings growers ascribe to their decisions and actions in labor management. These techniques include multiple readings of interviews and field notes, coding and categorizing data, identifying and interpreting findings, and identifying and describing relationships between themes. I have also outlined important issues of ethics and trustworthiness. Measures were taken to prevent participants from harm, and various

steps were taken to ensure a high level of credibility and dependability in the research. Finally, I have also acknowledged the study's methodological limitations.

In the next chapter, I discuss and analyze key findings from the study. These findings and the major themes that connect them are closely linked to key concepts I address in previous chapters. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 and the research methods described in this chapter provide substantive, theoretical and methodological underpinnings for the research. The next chapter presents analytic results of the study.

CHAPTER 4:

Interpretation and Analysis of Findings

1. Introduction of chapter

In this chapter, I describe, interpret, and analyze findings that pertain to the kinds of labor practices participant farmers' adopt on their farms (Research Question 1), and how their experiences and perspectives of labor issues shape labor management decisions (Research Question 2). This analysis explores how key internal and external factors, including issues of structure and farmers' agency, affect the ways small-scale growers make decisions regarding labor management on the farm. I approach the analysis by comparing and contrasting divergent labor management styles, as well as differing modes of response to management challenges.

First, I offer a brief description of the types of farm tasks that are performed on participants' farms and the types of workers that are employed. This contextual information provides the reader with a better understanding of the specific labor requirements on these farms, as well as the challenges this set of growers encounters in filling their labor needs. In this section, I also illustrate a typical workday on participant farms.

Next, I introduce and discuss two patterns of divergence that have emerged from interview and field data. The first pattern represents differing labor management styles. I characterize these contrasting approaches to labor management as either *formal* or *informal*, or as having more or less structure. The second pattern represents different ways farmers respond to labor-related challenges and change. These modes of response are characterized by more *accepting* or more *resistant* approaches. For each of these

analytic categories, I present findings and support them with a discussion of particular labor management practices farmers are employing, as well as the experiences, perceptions, and key social actors that influence their labor management decisions.

The next section in the chapter is designed to integrate key findings and analytic categories and explore how they are related. I discuss how the two key divergences concerning growers' labor management approaches influence their outlook on labor situations on their farms. I introduce important themes that link analytic findings and discuss the relationships between these concepts. I also discuss how theoretical elements of structure and agency play a role in labor management decisions. I conclude the chapter with a summary of important concepts from the analysis of findings.

2. Context

Farm work is often characterized by manual labor. This requisite poses particular challenges to farmers as they search for reliable and physically capable employees. Farm businesses, however, can be quite complex in their operations and require skills and expertise of farmers and their employees that extend beyond physical labor. During interviews with participant growers, I asked questions about the kinds of tasks that are performed on their farms by hired workers, family workers, and the farmers themselves.

Table 4.1 summarizes all of the farm tasks that were described by participants. Tasks are categorized according to job types, as different duties require different skill sets or levels of experience. The first two categories, manual tasks and maintenance tasks, require basic manual skills and are characterized by repetition and relatively little decision-making. The third category, mechanical tasks, involves the use of farm machinery and requires specified training or experience with the operation of certain

kinds of equipment. The fourth group, planning and management tasks, includes jobs that require greater commitment to the farm business and greater decision-making responsibilities.

Table 4.1: Summary of farm tasks

Manual	Maintenance	Mechanical	Planning/Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse work • Seeding • Planting • Transplanting • Harvesting • Row covering • Training plants • Pruning • Packing • Splitting and hauling firewood • Watering • Filling pots and flats • Mixing potting soil • Grading/sorting • Cutting flowers • Baking • Trellising • Thinning fruit • Pulling brush • Placing and moving bees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment maintenance • Greenhouse clean-up • Building storage crates • Painting machinery • Building projects • Domestic tasks • Cleaning up • Property maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tilling • Cultivating • Laying plastic and drip line • Spraying • Spreading fertilizer • Driving tractor • Harvesting • Weeding • Transplanting • Planting • Mowing • Chopping brush • Pressing cider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop planning • Preparation for market • Setting prices • Arranging market displays • Record keeping • Delivery • Portioning • Monitoring greenhouses • Ordering seed • Ordering chemicals • Sales • Crop management • Planning for next season • Caring for poultry

The sequence, duration, and intensity of these diverse farm tasks vary according to different characteristics including farm size, farm commodity, level of mechanization, number of hired workers, workers' hours, and stage in the production cycle. Some generalizations can be drawn, however, to help illustrate a "typical day" on a small-scale or mid-sized fruit or vegetable farm. The data to support this description are drawn

directly from farmer interviews, and pieced together using my own experiences with farm work. Each participant was asked a question regarding a typical workday during the busy season; some also elaborated with descriptions of off-season work activities.

Table 4.2 depicts a composite summer workday on the farms in this study. The table helps demonstrate the repetitious nature of farm work, as well as the variety of tasks related to individual farms' levels of diversification. Of course, many variations occur on actual participant farms depending on commodity, farm infrastructure, and marketing venues. Also, unexpected events like poor weather conditions or broken farm machinery can influence daily work routines.

Table 4.2: Typical workday on sample farms

	Work tasks	Who performs these tasks
Early morning	Harvesting of heat-sensitive crops A, B, and C (O) Watering greenhouse (I) Spraying: manual or mechanized (O)	FO, FM, HW FO, FM FO, FM
Late morning	Harvesting of crops D and E (O) Seeding (I) Planting (O) Weeding: manual or mechanized (O) Retail (I)	FO, FM, HW FO, FM, HW FM, HW
Mid-day	Break (I)	Shared or separate lunch breaks
Early afternoon	Harvesting of crops F and G (O) Planting (O) Washing and packing (I) Retail (I)	FO, FM, HW FO, FM, HW HW FM, HW
Late afternoon	Harvesting of crops H and I (O) Packing for market (I) Retail (I)	FO, FM, HW FO, FM, HW FM, HW
Evening	Clean up (I/O) Spraying (O)	FO, FM, HW FO, FM

O: Outdoor tasks I: Tasks that take place under cover	FO: Farm operator FM: Family member HW: Hired worker
--	--

It is important to note that different growers have varying approaches to how they assign farm tasks. While all of the farmers in the sample delegate manual labor jobs to hired workers, they do so with varying levels of trust or supervision. Some growers feel that they can allocate tasks that require greater levels of mechanical skill or decision-making responsibility to their employees, while others reserve more skilled jobs for themselves or experienced family members. These concepts of trust and responsibility will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The types of workers that are employed on these small-scale, seasonal farms vary greatly according to the type of commodity being produced, the job tasks that take place on the farm, and the availability of local and non-local workers. Figure 4.1 illustrates how farmers in the study employ different types of workers to fill their various labor needs throughout the production cycle. These labor configurations include combinations of part-time and full-time employees, seasonal and year-round workers, and family members. All 15 of the farm operations in this study draw from at least two of the four different groups of workers types, and some employ workers from as many as four of the five types. The employment of these combinations of worker types demonstrates that participant growers must be flexible with their hiring practices in order to fill the labor needs on their farms. Later in this chapter, I address this important aspect of flexibility and adaptability among the farmers in this sample.

Figure 4.1: Types of workers employed on participant farms

		Farm number														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Worker type	FT/YR	X		X					X				X	X	X	X
	FT/S			X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	PT/YR	X		X					X							X
	PT/S		X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X		X	X
	Family		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	

FT: Full-time	YR: Year-round
PT: Part-time	S: Seasonal

3. Divergent labor management styles

An analysis of interview and field data reveal that growers adopt an amalgamation of both formal and informal labor practices by using more or less structure in their labor management plans. This hybridized style is likely due to the need for flexibility in farm labor management, with special consideration of the small scale of these particular farms and the irregularity and seasonality of their labor needs. This section illuminates some of the ways these formal and informal approaches are manifested in farmers’ labor practices, as well as how growers’ interactions with key social actors influence these divergent management styles. I briefly summarize the various labor practices used on sample farms by addressing how growers approach three categories of practices: employment incentives; interaction with workers; and strategies including recruitment, training and supervision. I then discuss some of these practices in more detail, as well as farmers’ experiences with various labor issues, when I address how their decisions are

influenced by four key categories of social actors: family; hired workers; local community; and regulatory organizations.

A. Formal management styles

Characterization of formal management styles

Formal and informal styles of labor management can be distinguished, in part, by the kinds of incentives employers offer their workers. Participant growers who espouse a more structured approach to monetary and non-monetary incentives describe formalized incentives agreements based on their own perceptions of fairness or deservedness. Their approach to wages, bonuses, or added perks is carefully calculated and based on certain employee qualities. These qualities include level of experience, job title, and time commitment to the farm. Some of these growers describe their use of a “contract” or “agreement” that outlines the incentives they offer employees.

For example, most growers create formal payment arrangements for family and hired workers. These various arrangements include hourly wages, monthly stipends supplemented by in-kind incentives like meals and lodging, and yearly salaries. One mid-sized vegetable grower adopts a highly structured approach to wages and incentives as he considers the skills and expectations of workers in different categories. For example, he uses different payment methods for hourly workers than for apprentices. This is largely due to the added incentives of education and instruction that are expected from his apprentices and the different levels of management responsibilities that are required of them. Another grower bases his workers’ wages on level of experience. For example, the starting wage for teenage workers is minimum wage, while more

experienced workers or migrant workers are paid more per hour because of their higher efficiency and quality of work.

Formal or structured forms of interaction are another way formal management styles are expressed by participant farmers. Growers in the sample who maintain a high level of structure in their interactions with employees promote scheduled or organized ways of communicating with them. These structured interactions include regular, scheduled meetings; written communications such as task boards or sheets; premeditated adaptation plans for when unexpected events occur; and formal instruction or training of workers.

Several growers organize regular meetings with workers on a daily or weekly basis. These farmers feel this kind of regular and structured interaction with employees improves communication about farm tasks and workers' responsibilities. One farm operator describes the importance of her weekly meetings with farm managers:

We walk every week and we prioritize what needs to happen and, you know, that sort of thing. So it's kind of this ongoing dialogue, you know, that we have a plan at the beginning and we keep checking in every week... It's very important. That regular meeting time with staff, no matter who they are, is really important agriculturally, because it's so intense. You know, and once the season begins, sometimes it's hard to meet, but it's very important. (Farm 1)

Regular meetings also provide an opportunity to discuss new or specific job tasks that require special explanation or training. Meetings allow farmers and workers to address potential changes in work plans due to weather conditions, equipment failures, employee absences, or other factors that might alter work routines. One grower describes how he uses a structured form of communication in the form of a daily task board and includes more than enough tasks to fill the day in case unexpected changes occur:

Oh, very seldom do we get everything done. I always prepare a list so that we never run out. I don't want to run out and think, oh I'll have to go back into the house and think what else is to do. I mean, I always have more to do. And then there's always, very frequently something that turns up that you weren't planning for. Have a flat tire, or a piece of equipment or something breaks, you have to bring it in and weld it. You had your planting crew of five people ready to do transplanting. Now they have to take an hour off to do something else, so you have to have some contingency, um, items on the list to do in case what we're planning to do doesn't work out at the time. (Farm 3)

Specific strategies for recruiting, training and supervising workers can also be more or less formal in nature. More structured recruitment strategies, for example, include newspaper and webpage advertisements, formal interviews with prospective employees, and deliberate efforts to retain workers for more than one year. Formal training and supervising techniques include regular meetings and instructive seminars, the designation of qualified individuals to be trainers or supervisors, and the use of rules in the workplace. For example, growers describe rules for employee behavior in some instances, as well as rules regarding health and safety.

Beyond using formal media for advertizing farm jobs, some growers use particularly structured methods for recruiting workers who they hope will remain on the farm for an entire production season and for multiple seasons. One grower describes a formal application process for farm apprentices that requires considerable commitment from himself, as the employer, and prospective employees:

We have an application process. We have references we check out. We get a one-page sort of statement of their interests and how an apprenticeship might relate to their career goals. Ah, we ask them to have a farm visit if it's at all feasible, and if it's not we do a more thorough conversation by telephone...The farm visit is pretty significant. And if we don't have a farm visit, we, we sometimes accept the person on probation for a minimum one month or, you know. And if it doesn't seem like it's something that's good, mutually ah, beneficial thing, we can terminate it, or they can terminate it. We've done that. I think on one occasion that

we've had that. We've had a couple persons who, oh, six, eight years ago, came and stayed only a day or two days or three days and said this isn't for us and they just up and left. So we try to do a little more thorough analysis of the compatibility question than we used to. And then if we don't have a thorough, fairly good understanding, we have this proviso of a one-month trial period. (Farm 3)

Farm operators in the sample also adopt various formal training and supervising practices with their employees. Again, regular meetings provide structured opportunities for growers to train workers. One grower holds a weekly meeting with apprentices, in addition to daily morning meetings with all field workers, to discuss specific farming practices in detail. This structured, yet optional, meeting also represents one of the educational incentives he formally offers his apprentices. This grower and others with more structured approaches to training often depend on experienced employees to train new workers in particular tasks. For these growers, this responsibility represents an added, often contractual incentive that provides workers with training and management skills on the farm.

Supervising practices among farmers also reflect more formal or structured management styles. Some growers are more likely to adopt regular, structured patterns in their supervision of workers like working alongside them to ensure the quality and efficiency of their work or assigning more experienced or trusted workers to that supervisory role. One orchard operator occasionally works with his crew of migrant workers during harvest season, but more often allows a long-term experienced employee to supervise their work. Sometimes farmers adopt formal supervising practices to ensure their employees' safety. Some growers describe increased supervision of workers who operate farm machinery or specialized equipment. One farmer describes his supervision of an employee who occasionally uses spraying equipment: "I'm a licensed sprayer, so if

[he] is going to do spraying, it's under my supervision with all the proper safety clothing and all that stuff" (Farm 2).

Influential social actors

In Chapter 2, I identified four major social actors that shape growers' labor management decisions: family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory organizations. In this section, I discuss how growers' interactions with these various actors influence their management styles. I support findings about farmers' practices, experiences, and perceptions with examples from interview data.

Family

Although family labor arrangements are often informal, some growers speak about more formalized ways they deal with family workers. Some of these growers adopt formal mechanisms for providing wages and incentives. For example, several participants mentioned paying their children hourly wages. Two of them stressed this point and explained why they feel it is important to maintain this measure of formality with family workers. One small-scale vegetable grower says, "We paid our kids... It was, for a couple of reasons. Obviously first, because it's fair. Ah, and it also taught them how to work and what to work for and what the value of money was" (Farm 9). These growers' own values of fairness and a strong work ethic are major driving factors in their structured approach to the employment of family members.

Farm women on participant farms also take on formal or structured roles to facilitate the operation of the farm business. Several of the farms in the sample are jointly run by a husband and wife team, where neither partner brings in significant off-

farm income. Others, however, are not able to earn an adequate household income from the farm alone. In these cases, women take advantage of the flexibility of their on-farm responsibilities to also assume off-farm jobs. These jobs offer the family added financial security by providing access to a more structured payment method and benefits like health care. One grower explains how his wife's off-farm teaching job is instrumental for them to be able to continue farming:

There's a really interesting connection, um, duality here is that a lot of the people who were farmers or small farmers also were teachers. So it was like, so that was an interesting combination... And it just so happens that that's kind of the way we've balanced. 'Cause my wife is a high school art teacher. But, that's not how we started out. You know, for the first ten years, we both farmed. And you know, finally she said, well, I'm going to go back to school (laughs) and get my master's and I'm going to get a job. And it, and I resisted that. Because I was still, psychologically, you know, a lot of people, you know, even myself, are stuck with this idea that you have to make all your living off the land. It's like, it's literally impossible to do... It is obsolete, because of the type of economy we have. And it's good, you know, to maybe start out with some of those ideals, of being part of the land and so on, but you, at some point, reality hits, and it usually hits with your mortgage payment, your car payment, whatever payment you've got to make. Your FHA loans, you know, all these things, bring reality home to your door, and you say, ok if you want to stay on this piece of land, you've got to bring some money in somehow. (Farm 9)

Hired Workers

Hired workers represent one of the most important influencing actors on farmers' labor management decisions. Participant growers understand very well that their farm businesses depend on hired help and that they are obliged to achieve satisfactory employment arrangements with their workers if they want to maintain a workforce of good quality and reliability. For some farmers, implementing formal labor practices is vital to holding on to good workers. These formal strategies are apparent in the way

some growers deal with year-round and seasonal positions and how they structure wages and incentives.

Participant farmers are aware of the seasonal challenges of employing agricultural workers. They recognize that most local and qualified adults are not willing to accept a seasonal job. One grower describes his appreciation of this fact and how he strives to overcome this challenge:

So I think keeping local people requires a farm to provide nearly year-round work, not just seasonal work... These people don't want to go to Florida in the winter. They want to keep having some income. And so that's sort of my goal to have the winter CSA share program continue to be an important part because that provides work activity through the winter for at least a skeleton managing crew that you want to have for the following very busy season. (Farm 3)

In this and similar instances, a structured approach to year-round employment is attractive to local residents and results in a limited number of year-round positions for interested and qualified employees. Another grower has gradually built up off-season work that allows him to supply year-round employment for apprentices who would like to stay through the winter: "We have certain things we do in the winter that we have set up from a long, long time ago to be sources of employment, sources of income... So each year we do gradually... accumulate a little bit more, ah, stuff for people. To keep people busy" (Farm 8). He also describes how his efforts to provide year-round positions pay off in the time and money it saves with training:

And that's one of the biggest reasons why I want that continuity... So for instance if somebody stays for a second or third season, they're going to have new jobs. But they already know those jobs from watching other people do it, you know? And so their training is going to be minimal... It is a big motive for me to minimize that time. (Farm 8)

Some farmers also demonstrate a more structured style of labor management with their seasonal workers. They recognize that seasonal and part-time work is generally a drawback for prospective employees, but they also have found that some individuals prefer this kind of job. Again, these growers tend to consider the needs of workers. They describe concerns not only about the seasonality of farm jobs, but also the distance travelled by workers, their hours, and their wages. One farmer, whose farm is isolated from large population centers, explains how he considers his employees' distance from the farm when making labor management decisions: "I have to make it worth it for someone to come out here. Especially if they're coming farther than you know, ten or fifteen miles" (Farm 9). He goes on to explain how he feels obliged to offer sufficient work hours to employees, even if he does not actually require full-time labor. "There's sort of the obligation of, you know, if they're going to come down here, you've got to give them a full day's work. Otherwise, it's not worth it for them. You've got to make it worth their gas money" (Farm 9). Often, growers are motivated to seek out individuals whose work requirements are flexible. This involves some structure and forethought to target certain worker types based on their availability and flexibility. Such worker types include persons who do not depend exclusively on farm work for their household income like students, retired individuals, and non-working mothers.

Most growers in the sample also assume some level of formality or structure in their approaches to wages and non-monetary incentives. This kind of formality seems to be a response to the needs of hired employees and their desire for stability in a typically fickle line of work. A clear and contractual approach to wages and pay raises may give

employees a good understanding of job expectations, as well as their employers' regard for fairness and deservedness.

Structured approaches to non-monetary benefits like a formal commitment to education and professional training are also important ways farmers promote worker satisfaction. In some instances, growers make this a major facet of their contracts with employees, especially with apprentices and interns who accept farm jobs with the expectation of being trained in agricultural practices and management. One grower describes his efforts to provide formal opportunities for training and education: "The apprentices are here because they want to learn how to do organic vegetable farming and they want to know how to manage, so according to their interests, we cog them in to actually manage aspects of the farm" (Farm 3).

Growers who are oriented toward structured management styles also are able to use formal modes of locating seasonal help. The employment of migrant workers, in particular, seems to be a method of labor planning that requires a high level of structure and organization. Few of the farms in this sample hire migrant workers, and those that do tend to be orchards with highly seasonal and relatively short periods when they require larger harvesting crews. The biological nature of agriculture plays a large role in the availability of these workers as different commodities and regional variations in climate and agricultural production largely dictate their employment arrangements. For example, orchardists who participated in this study have hired migrant workers who also harvest blueberries in Maine, citrus fruit in Florida, and Christmas trees in Pennsylvania.

While some migrant labor is located in informal ways, certain participant farmers describe a high level of preparedness required for contacting contractors and hiring

migrant workers. None of the growers who hired migrants through liaisons considered these individuals official contractors, but referred to them instead as a “broker” (Farm 23) or “unofficial contractor” (Farm 22). Regardless of what they call them, there is a formal aspect to this method of procuring farm labor. Furthermore, these farmers demonstrate a relatively high level of structured planning in order to accommodate migrant workers. Even if there is no written contract, the employment of migrant workers often requires significant preparation including attention to documentation, lodging, transportation, and payment. One farmer justifies investing the effort and finances in hiring migrant workers because they are so compatible for highly seasonal work and manual labor: “And the Mexicans were the answer... They took a big load off my shoulders. And I’ll be honest with you. I pay them more. ‘Cause they’re worth it” (Farm 15).

Local community

Attracting and retaining workers from the local community is a challenge for all of the growers in the sample. Some reasons for this include seasonal limitations of farm jobs, sparse populations surrounding some participant farms, and what farmers identify as the general public’s lack of interest in agricultural work. In order to locate interested and compatible workers from the community, some growers employ formal methods and deliberate recruitment strategies. This involves targeting specific groups or worker types through formal approaches. Growers use ads or postings in newspapers, websites, and local schools and colleges. Some utilize access to email-based list serves to find workers. One participant describes how she sent a letter to a local Master Gardener group and procured two employees through that contact:

We put a letter out to the Master Gardeners and said we're looking for two people to work 20 hours a week for... April, May, and June. Must include one weekend day or one afternoon or whatever it is. Maybe it's gonna be like somewhere between ten and 15 or 20. And, you know, that basically the job is only for this period of time... But our goal is that you come back every year and do this. Very specific. (Farm 1)

She stresses that being clear about job expectations can result in attracting individuals who are content with a seasonal position or actively looking for part-time or seasonal employment.

Holding on to good local workers is another significant challenge for many growers. For participant farmers who demonstrate a more formal management style, they accomplish this by actively investing in these employees. This includes pay raise structures for experienced workers, more work hours, and the opportunity for more responsibility or management. One grower explains how he is in the process of creating job positions for particular local employees in order to keep them on from year to year: "This past winter is the first time that I've been keeping two people on at least part-time through the winter... Just trying to bridge them over so they can be available when we get busy starting in March. Then they can step up to full-time work again" (Farm 3).

Regulatory organizations

Sometimes formalities and structures are imposed on farm operators through governmental or regulatory organizations. Some participant farmers are very straightforward about regulations and demonstrate the ability to comply with them without excessive hassle. This often requires formal labor management practices to ensure workers' health and safety, as well as the quality and safety of farm products. Workers' legal documentation is a requisite that some growers manage well. One

farming couple exhibits an exceptional level of organization with several thick binders of documents for all of the employees they ever hired. The husband explains why they keep such careful records:

We tell them up front. We try to go by all the rules, we take off all the taxes, and we do not pay cash. There's always, every year there's a couple people come, and they want to pick apples, but they want paid under the table. Because they're signing up for welfare or something. They don't want it to be recorded. And we just tell them, in a nice way, that we just don't do that. Because we get audited. And if you don't have the books in shape, then you have a lot of explaining to do. (Farm 14)

Farm operators who practice a high level of organization seem to have an easier time dealing with new regulations.

B. Informal management styles

Characterization of informal management styles

Instead of espousing more formal management styles described above, some growers prefer to adopt informal or less structured methods of labor management. These methods might include incentives practices that are less premeditated, less formal, and based on generosity rather than formal agreements or contracts. For example, some participant farmers describe informal ways of rewarding their employees such as allowing them access to free produce. Unlike with more formal approaches to non-monetary incentives, these in-kind benefits are not necessarily discussed during the hiring process, but are offered in a more spontaneous fashion. One grower, for example, allows employees to go home with unsold produce from the farmers market or seconds that cannot be sold at market. Sometimes, in-kind incentives are not always offered across the board, but instead depend on workers' particular situations or farmers' relationships with particular employees. For example, some participants describe how they give

informal benefits to workers who are in need or whose families are in need. One farm couple describes giving clothing and other supplies to a Russian immigrant family they once employed. Their generosity with this family was spontaneous, based not on formal employment plans, but rather the particular needs of these individuals.

Employers' interactions with their workers can also be characterized as informal or less structured. Some growers describe how they like a relaxed, social, or family-like atmosphere on the farm where interactions are frequent and informal. The level of sociality in these contexts is often based on blends of employer and employee personalities, and can be problematic for very small farms that hire one or very few workers. One grower describes how informal relationships with solitary apprentices can be challenging and necessitate certain kinds of social interactions:

So our big question really is, are you happy alone? Can you, are you good with your own company?...Um, because, you'll be invited for dinner here, and you'll see us during the day, and you can talk to us, you know, when we're around... But they need to, you know, three or four or five nights a week, they need to be comfortable sitting in their private living space in the cabin, reading a book. (Farm 10)

Because communications are informal and less structured on some farms, there tends to be a need for more frequent interactions with workers. For several participant farmers, an informal approach with workers requires growers to work alongside their employees for most tasks. For others, less formal interaction with their workers allows their employees more freedom on the job and more decision-making responsibilities. One grower believes that his employees value this freedom: "They're happy 'cause they're outdoors. They don't have too much hassle. They don't have to put up with me" (Farm 2, husband). Tasks and responsibilities are often communicated orally, as needed, and sometimes from worker to worker rather than from farmer to farmhand. One grower

describes frequent updates with his workers throughout the day to determine which task should be done next. Other farmers allow family members or trusted employees to make some decisions regarding work assignments.

Growers with less formal management styles adopt a flexible and adaptable approach to the types of workers they are willing to employ and their scheduling of workers' hours. Some farm operators express a preference for hiring employees who are willing to work flexible or irregular hours, or who can be called on for short periods for time-sensitive tasks. These employees include retired people, idealistic individuals seeking farming experience, non-working mothers, or volunteers. Participant farmers who employ these types of workers demonstrate an openness to these less traditional worker types to fill their labor needs.

Informal recruitment strategies include attracting workers through local community networks or word of mouth. Job applicants might be drawn to the farm through their patronage of the farm business or their acquaintance with other employees. One grower states, "Ninety percent of our attraction is through other employees or a sign in our sales room" (Farm 12). Some growers also describe informal, yet deliberate, attempts at contacting local immigrant populations for interested or available workers. One grower describes how many of his workers are procured through an informal network of immigrant and migrant workers who are tied to previous employees in some way. He calls on one employee in particular when he is seeking short-term or seasonal workers.

Some of these informal or unstructured methods for recruiting workers resemble trial and error, by which farmers might not have an adequate sense of the reliability or

quality of labor these workers will provide. One grower describes this informal recruitment method that eventually provided him with a reliable crew of workers: “People just saw we had vegetables, I guess, originally. And then they came out and asked. And we had a number of different people, over the years, before we hit on these people that we have now” (Farm 6).

Less formal means of training and supervision include verbal instructions, hands-on training, and farmers’ working alongside employees to maintain quality and efficiency of work. Again, informal methods of training and supervision often require more frequent interactions between farmers and their employees. One farmer describes how this approach requires much of his own time and patience: “A lot of it is personal supervision. Ah, doing work with the employee, to the point where I know that they can do certain tasks on their own” (Farm 9). Another grower expresses his frustration with this kind of informal, hands-on training technique when workers do not pick up skills quickly: “I mean you try, you train them and show them. Spend, you know, maybe 15 minutes, 20 minutes or more. Showing them exactly how to do it and you may as well... not even have said anything” (Farm 15).

Interestingly, all participant farmers who describe experiences of firing employees do so through informal means. These methods include casual or informal conversations about ending workers’ employment. One grower feels that “compassionate conversation” (Farm 1) provides employees with the opportunity to realize they are not a good fit for the job. She says, “And I’ve really found a way to basically say, ‘How’s this working for you?’ Because typically if it isn’t working for the rest of the company, then it isn’t working for the person” (Farm 1). Other employers are less direct about dealing

with employees with whom they are dissatisfied. One farm couple tends to avoid firing workers directly by saying they have enough help: “A couple times we were, when they called the following spring for work, we just said, ‘Well I think we’re set for this year. We’ve got, you know... enough people.’ But um, I don’t think anybody we’ve really said you’re out of here” (Farm 5, wife). Sometimes, in the case of migrant worker crews, farm operators allow the group to decide if a particular employee should stay or go. One mid-sized vegetable farm operator describes how his crew of Mexican workers had developed an informal system for discipline and firing:

The ones that are usually here, year after year, they take charge. If they get, if they get a guy, a Mexican comes, and they don’t like him. They don’t feel he’s doing what he should be doing, as far as his share of the work, they will make it hard on him. Either he will fess up, and work the way everybody else does, or they’ll make it that miserable, they don’t want him around... And usually it ends up that way. I had one guy, he quit. He was here a while, and I knew it wasn’t going very well, because they said that he’s too lazy. He don’t want to do his part... And before I knew what happened, another guy was here. (Farm 13)

This farmer expresses how this informal and self-regulating behavior among his workers maintains good work standards, but also diminishes some of his own power as an employer: “You’re kind of in control but still kind of out of control” (Farm 13).

Influential social actors

Family

Family members represent the most flexible and informally managed type of workers for farmers. Participant growers draw from their immediate family for help including spouses, children, and parents. Some growers employ extended family members as part of their regular staff or in circumstances of substantial need. Both kinds of family workers tend to be on-call for unusual working hours and short periods when

growers need extra hands for time-sensitive tasks. Several growers describe how the employment of family members tends to be periodic, depending on school schedules or other changes in availability. One farmer illustrates how his children are periodically available during the summer months:

Like the last year my son... graduated from college and he came home and he just wanted to work as much as he could. He just finished school. He had loans... He's moved on now, and my daughter's going to be home for about a month to help with transplanting in the spring. That'll be a real advantage. [My other son] and I were just going over his work schedule this morning. (Farm 10, husband)

While this kind of informal arrangement sometimes introduces uncertainty into the farm labor mix, growers always seem welcoming of any help from the family. Furthermore, family members and principle farm operators themselves tend to absorb extra work hours and tasks that hired help do not accomplish. This often means long hours and a heavy workload for farmers and their family. One grower describes how this kind of work can be difficult for family workers:

The negatives are when [hired workers] all want off the same day, and nobody wants to work (laughs). I mean there have been days where [my husband] and I just have to do it all, because everybody has a valid reason for not being here or reasonably valid or somebody with not as valid a reason asked way in advance, you gave them the approval and then somebody else has an emergency that comes up. And um, you know, then all of the sudden, we're just putting in a lot of hours. You know we had, one of our staff had just a lot of family tragedies, lost two nieces last year, um, you know, teenagers in her family died. And what can you say? But somebody has to make up her hours. And that's, that's, and you have to hold the job. So it's not like you can hire somebody, and everybody else says well I really like working only my hours that I work. They don't really want to put in more hours 'cause that's why they like the job. (laughs) So all of the sudden, you know, it's us! (Farm 5, wife)

These informal family work arrangements can introduce interesting dynamics for family members with regards to communication and inequality. Some growers describe a

need for exceptional patience with spouses or other family members while working together. One participant lends insight into challenges his own family faces while working on the farm: “And those priorities sometimes can conflict, and you know, clash, and it can strain, you know, families. Ah, emotionally and psychologically sometimes” (Farm 9). Another grower expresses how he struggles in his role as “boss” when family members are employed in an informal manner:

My dad’s always disagreeing with me about things, so I don’t want him instructing people because he’ll instruct them the wrong way. I can’t fire him. I can’t make him do what I say. I can’t even get rid of him (laughs). And [my wife’s] the same way. She gets her own ideas about how something should be done, and they’re wrong. (Farm 4)

This grower is at least partly joking when he deprecates the knowledge and skills of his father and his wife. In fact, he and other male participants express great appreciation for the informal, flexible, and domestic roles their wives play within the farm business. Several farmers describe how farm women are instrumental to the farm organization, as well as their farms’ labor management plans. For example, some women are responsible for preparing meals for family and non-family workers. One grower describes how his wife prepares lunch for workers on the farm:

But they eat good, you know, and that... And we feed them a lunch. And my wife makes a dinner for them, really, at lunch, so it’s a lot of people to feed. Because we have these three men, and then we have two or three girls that are working in the market, either packing vegetables or, grading tomatoes is the hardest. We have the three girls in. But there’s generally two or three girls, plus my wife and me, and my son and his wife and two little children. So there’s a lot of food to be prepared. (Farm 6)

Another grower, whose wife’s primary income comes from an off-farm job, describes how her domestic duties around the farm are an important aspect to the farm’s operation and his own morale:

... Her involvement is in areas that you wouldn't necessarily connect to the farm, the business itself. But are crucial to it. Ah, basically, doing, she does incredible amount of just maintenance of stuff. You know? Ah, mowing, you know, making sure things look neat, which is really important. You know, it's not just that your place looks nice. Because...if you don't sort of maintain a certain atmosphere (laughs), décor, I wouldn't say décor, but a certain level of organization, then, again, things devolve. And... it gets to the efficiency of the farm. And you know, ah, and I'm not necessarily the best organizer. But I know that things need to be...at least in a pile where you know they're going to be. (laughs) Even if it's not quite organized. But [my wife] spends a lot of time making sure that things...are in the places they should be. And it's ah, and she doesn't do a lot of field work. But she does a lot of work that makes my life a whole lot easier. In terms of ah, you know, maintenance, and making sure things are basically in the right place, and work well. (Farm 9)

These and other growers understand that even if some of the tasks their wives perform are not directly generating profits, they do contribute to the success of their businesses.

In the sample of 15 farms, there are 14 married male respondents. Even though there are no questions in the interview guide explicitly inquiring about women's work tasks, 13 of these 14 men actively acknowledge the formal and informal roles their wives perform on the farm. Several of them emphasize how they believe their wives' roles are integral to their farms' success.

Hired workers

Some growers who prefer less structured labor management styles maintain a certain level of informality with hired employees as well. The ways they manage and interact with wage workers are more relaxed and less premeditated. Informal labor practices can be observed in the kinds of non-monetary incentives they offer and the overall working atmosphere they provide on the farm.

Farmers who use an informal approach to incentives do not use written or spoken agreements to inform workers of non-monetary benefits. Instead, some incentives like free produce, shared meals, or lodging depend on the particular employment circumstances of workers or growers' relationships with workers. For example, one farm couple describes how workers who are acquaintances or extended family members occasionally lodge on the farm:

We've had just mainly family members that have needed, or like, my sister-in-law's brother. You know he's not really a family member but kind of is. Or my niece's boyfriend. You know, they might come and stay. We have a little bit of a bunk house up in the seed house. But, that's just like a bedroom. They still use the house and shower here and eat with us. (Farm 5, wife)

Another farm couple gives produce "seconds" to the family of one employee, because they know the family struggles economically and appreciates the food:

Wife: I'd say they are an extremely poor family. And if we have extra flowers, and then on his way home, he'll drop, you know, his aunts, his cousins... their tomatoes or their flowers or whatever. The extra.

Husband: And he has family that really appreciates it, and they'll can it... But they're really appreciative of it and write us little notes. "Oh, thank you." (Farm 2)

Some growers' informal approaches to labor management are evident in the atmosphere they encourage in the workplace. These farmers prefer a relaxed working environment that one participant describes by saying, "We're like a big family here" (Farm 6). These growers seem to have relatively comfortable and interactive relationships with their hired employees. Most growers in the sample tend to work alongside their employees for at least some farm tasks. Some farmers describe how they converse and joke with workers while working with them and how they make an effort to make the job more enjoyable. One grower describes how this interaction unfolds in the

field with one employee: “He helped us pick tomatoes, and it was really fun ‘cause we’d be talking about all these things. All these different things... And he said, ‘You call me next year ‘cause I want to do this again. It was a lot of fun’” (Farm 2, wife). Another farmer, who uses walkie-talkies and code names to communicate with field help, laughs when he recalls these interactions: “That’s a lot of fun” (Farm 3), he says. On several farms and orchards, farm operators describe how they feel that some of their hired workers are part of the family. One grower treats one long-term employee much like a family member: “I trust him to do anything... Because he’s, we know him over the years. You know when he’s here alone, he eats with us in the house... And we got to know him, and he’s got three children. He’s a family man. And he’s a super nice person” (Farm 6).

Local community

Those farmers who do hire people from the local community are often able to locate them through informal measures. Several growers in the sample describe finding local employees through word of mouth. Many of these local workers inquire about farm employment because of direct contact with the business as patrons or neighbors. These tend to be individuals who find farm work appealing for various reasons. One participant ascribes the flexibility of work hours as a major reason for attracting local seasonal workers. He describes his experiences hiring female employees with school-aged children. These women “needed an extra job, had flexible hours, and their main concern was getting home when their kids got home from school” (Farm 9). On another farm, the operators find that individuals who enjoy outdoor work are interested in working for them:

Wife: Well that's true too and all of our people are plant lovers. I mean they like gardening. And sometimes, like the ladies, the retired ladies, they really start to want to cut their hours back if we keep them past June because they're itching to get in their own gardens. So they like to be done end of May and ah, out into their own patches.

Husband: Yeah, we really don't have a person who's just... this isn't just a job and you know the job happens to be selling plants. They're all gardeners.

Wife: Even the teenagers. They like to be outside or they like physical work. (Farm 5)

Other workers hear about job openings or the possibility of work through other farm employees. These informal ties are useful for growers who hire local workers and members of local immigrant communities. A grower whose farm is located near a large Dominican community has employed friends or family of a long-term worker. Another farmer, although his general labor management style is fairly structured otherwise, contacts many of his harvesters informally through a year-round, long-term Mexican employee.

For some farmers, neighbors provide an important source of labor, particularly during times when extra hands are needed for time-sensitive tasks. One grower describes what he refers to as “neighboring:”

Around here there's an old concept – you'd call it you'd neighbor. I'd help my neighbor's share with something and then he'd come and help me. So we neighbor with people in the hort[iculture] business. So then when it's greenhouse covering time, we'll get [our two hired workers] and [my wife] and I and a couple of other friends that I've done favors for them. And they'll come, 'cause you need, you know, like seven or eight people to put the greenhouse covering on. And it takes a couple hours. So then they'll come and help us do those jobs. (Farm 2, husband)

While this particular farmer has had good experiences with his neighbors' availability and willingness to help out, another grower talks about how this kind of relationship with neighbors no longer exists in his community:

And if you were picking cucumbers and you couldn't get it done, they peaked and you weren't ready, you didn't have enough help – you go ask the neighbor, “Hey, if you're done, ah, could your kids come down?” And four or five kids'd show up and they'd bail your butt out. Bottom line. That doesn't happen anymore. It doesn't matter what job. They ain't comin'. (Farm 13)

It seems that much success with finding local workers lies in farmers' openness to informal hiring practices. They are willing to take risks with hiring people who have located their farms through word of mouth, and they tend to have good relationships with their neighbors and their local communities. Furthermore, they are flexible and adaptable to the types of workers who approach them or are available to them, including workers from immigrant populations.

Regulatory organizations

Some growers tend to have an informal approach to labor-related regulations, particularly with regards to the documentation of hired workers. One grower has paid workers “under the table” in the past because of difficulty finding local help who were willing to work under more official working conditions. He describes this experience with some reservations:

Oh, I get lots of calls. Lots of calls. Then, maybe half of them would want paid cash. 'Cause they're getting disability. Or they're on welfare. Which is about the same thing I guess. They're about the same thing. Or because they're getting unemployment. So they want paid cash. You don't pay them cash, they don't work. And I, when I was desperate years ago, I would resort to that. (Farm 15)

Other growers seem aware of the risks involved in hiring workers or contractors without proper documentation, but are willing to hire without digging too deeply into the legal status of their employees. This “don’t ask” approach to workers’ papers is especially relevant for growers who hire immigrant or migrant workers. One orchard operator explains how he tries to make sure his own dealings with employees are legal, but is not sure about other individuals’ practices. He describes his interactions with one contact who locates migrant workers for him:

He’s an unofficial contractor. (laughs) It’s a grey area. I don’t ask. He never showed me. So I doubt if he has a license. But what I do is I pay each one individually, so nobody can ever come back to me and say, “Hey, you hired a contract service at this place.” I don’t pay one guy. I pay each individual employee. And that gets all the legalities off of my chest. (Farm 12)

4. Contrasting responses toward challenge and change

Even the most successful farm manager faces challenges with human resource management. There are too many uncertainties involved in agricultural employment to expect otherwise. In order to address how small-scale seasonal growers might attain satisfaction with their labor situations, it is important to consider how they cope with labor-related challenges and change. Major challenges that arose in the literature and in farmer interviews can be categorized into three groups. First, there are challenges related to the biological nature of farming and the high seasonality of fruit and vegetable production. The biological and seasonal limitations that were described in Chapter 2 are major concerns for growers when they develop their labor management plans. A second set of challenges is related to requirements from various regulatory agencies including federal and state governments, certification programs, and farm labor programs.

Participant farmers describe how they must cope with regulations regarding workers' documentation, GAP certifications, housing requirements for workers, and contractual agreements with interns and apprentices. Third, farmers describe direct experience with challenges related to hired workers. Negative experiences, in particular, can have tremendous impact on the way growers respond to certain challenges.

Farmers demonstrate different mechanisms for responding to significant changes that affect their farm businesses. Examples from the interviews of these changes also can be categorized into three types. First, significant shifts in the composition of farm workforces can evoke different responses. These changes include the loss of workers who seem integral to farm success, particularly when family members leave the farm. Second, growers respond differently to changes in external regulations like minimum wage increases and the introduction of new certification programs like GAP. Third, changes in the local community can have significant impact on growers labor management decisions. These changes include the in-migration of certain ethnic populations, the introduction of new competitors, and the loss of local workers to other sectors or decreased interest in farming.

Farmers in this study demonstrate different kinds of responses to labor management challenges ranging from more *accepting* approaches to more *resistant* outlooks. Accepting responses include approaches to management issues that show a high level of commitment to the farm and employees or approaches that reflect a proactive stance toward labor challenges. Resistant responses include more reluctant or passive approaches to labor-related issues. Just as individual growers adopt both formal and informal labor management styles, all 15 participant farmers demonstrate both

accepting and resistant attitudes when faced with certain difficulties. In this section, I explore how particular challenges evoke different responses from individual farmers. First, in an effort to describe how I define either side of this accepting/resistant continuum, I briefly summarize various labor practices growers employ to address key labor management issues. Again, I categorize these types of practices in three groups: employment incentives; interaction with workers; and strategies including recruitment, training and supervision. I then address how their attitudes are shaped by their own values and the four major influencing actors of family, hired workers, local community and regulatory organizations.

A. Accepting responses toward labor challenges

Characterization of accepting approaches

Attracting and retaining good workers is a challenge that all small-scale growers in the sample must address in their labor management plans. Farmers who approach this dilemma with highly committed and proactive attitudes often use employment incentives to keep good help on the farm. Depending on the growers' management styles, these benefits might be offered in a formal or informal manner. Participant farmers describe incentives that are based on generosity and contractual agreements where tangible benefits are based on workers' merit. In-kind incentives include access to farm produce and provided or shared meals. More formal benefits include monetary bonuses, educational opportunities, and access to health insurance benefits. Several growers, particularly those that employ apprentices or interns, provide room and board as well as agricultural and management training for their employees. Some participant growers also make an effort to provide or find off-season work for their employees. While several

farmers in the sample describe their endeavors to supply winter farm work for at least some of their employees, one seasonal grower helps one regular worker find off-farm winter employment: “This winter we actually found a winter job for him, and he’s working this winter for some other neighbors and he does intermittent, um, this and that. And we’ve been trying to look for other opportunities” (Farm 5, husband).

Some growers also offer social benefits that are characterized by hospitality and sociality on the farm. These benefits include meals shared with the farm family, annual gatherings, and more impromptu celebrations. One grower, for example, is conscientious about celebrating the birthdays of his employees:

We have a lot of parties. Birthday parties. We set a time to celebrate everybody’s birthday. Cake and ice cream and sometimes a meal. The apprentices, day workers... children. One apprentice has a family of four children, so we celebrate theirs too. (Farm 3)

Other farmers describe occasional social gatherings for farm family members and employees. One farm couple hosts an annual picnic for their work team where they distribute bonuses: “We have a big picnic at the end of the year, so if we’ve done well, and it’s totally based on how well we’ve done. And then their bonuses are kind of I’d say commensurate with their hours worked” (Farm 5, wife). In this case, this social setting provides a time and place to distribute more formalized and merit-based incentives.

Growers who demonstrate accepting perspectives also show commitment to workers with regards to interpersonal interaction. These farmers dedicate considerable effort to their exchanges with employees in order to encourage clear communication of job requirements and a mutual understanding of employers’ and employees’ needs. For example, some growers create formal or informal ways of communicating farm tasks, and others provide regular meeting times to communicate with workers. One grower

describes a “plan of the day” (Farm 8) where a designated field manager distributes copies of the day’s work schedule to each employee. Other growers use less formal means of communicating with workers and tend to work alongside them for most farm tasks. These growers have frequent interactions with their employees in order to maintain a high level of worker satisfaction, as well as high efficiency and quality of work. One grower describes how he feels his Mexican employees appreciate his family’s direct involvement in farm work. He contrasts their level of interaction with less frequent interaction on larger farms: “I also think that’s why they like to work here... We do the same work they do... They said the difference between farmers up here and farmers in Florida – Farmers in Florida don’t work. They’re lazy” (Farm 13). Often, because of strong communication skills and regular interactions with workers, some growers feel they are able to trust employees with some decision-making responsibilities. For example, several farmers in the study express handing off certain responsibilities, like operating farm machinery, to experienced workers.

With regards to specific labor management strategies, participant growers with committed and proactive perspectives about labor challenges seem to develop diverse and innovative ways of attracting workers. Farmers in the sample who represent more accepting perspectives demonstrate openness to employing many worker types. They may draw from several different potential pools of employees including youth, retired individuals, immigrant workers, local residents, and interns and apprentices. They recognize the benefits of hiring different types of employees and are able to overcome difficulties involved with hiring each type. This includes drawing from untraditional categories of workers and providing flexible work schedules or year-round work. In the

recruitment process, growers exhibit proactive approaches by using both informal and informal methods for attracting potential local and non-local workers. One grower describes her open-minded attitude toward recruitment of local residents:

I think the community has the potential of being a really rich resource of labor, but it's just, you know, getting clear about what we're looking for and then sort of going out and then... I'm a big believer in that kind of thing though, you know. You just sort of say this is what we're looking for, put it out there and see. (Farm 1)

Recruitment methods used by participant farmers include newspaper and internet ads, market and public postings, and less formal ways of finding workers through word of mouth. Some growers in the sample describe recruitment practices that require significant investment of time and effort. Two growers, in particular, describe an application process that requires a written application, an interview, and a farm visit.

Growers with accepting outlooks also tend to show a high level of appreciation and commitment to their workers by offering monetary and non-monetary incentives. These farmers also place importance on regular verbal expressions of gratitude to their workers. As mentioned above, growers with a proactive approach to labor management interact frequently with their employees and tend to train through demonstration and hands-on instruction. Their attitudes throughout the training and supervision process are characterized by patience and the understanding that learning new skills takes time and repetition. One small-scale vegetable farmer expresses his acceptance of workers' learning limitations and his methods for training them:

I learned that very early on. You cannot take for granted that somebody knows how to do something. You have to tell them explicitly how to do something. And even a very smart person, will have to be told, many times and make a number of mistakes, on the same thing, over and over again, before they get it. (Farm 9)

Influential social actors

Family

Growers with accepting outlooks are also flexible with family workers. They welcome periodic employment from immediate and extended family and are willing to be flexible with their work schedules. They do not necessarily require family members to work on the farm, but encourage them to do so for reasons influenced by principles of a strong work ethic and the family's agricultural heritage.

Farmers' own agency plays a major role in the employment of family members on the farm. Personal values regarding work ethic represent a major reason for wanting their children to work on the farm. These growers express a desire that their children understand the value of hard work. Some, like the following farmer, expect or oblige their children to work as he did when he was young: "Well, we were raised on a farm, and we never had a day off... The only day off would be your funeral... And with my dad there was no coffee breaks, nothing" (Farm 11). Others allow their children to choose how much or what kinds of work they perform on the farm.

Farmers also express a desire to keep their farms and a penchant for farming within the family. This hope for inheritance and preserving the family farm is often deeply rooted and is evidenced in the handing off of certain management responsibilities. One farmer describes his hope that one of his sons will carry on the family business:

He might consider that. I mean, I don't care, you know, if I make much money myself. I could give him most of the profit. Because like I said, we're not on a tight budget. But, enough to pay our bills plus some more. And give him a good deal. And ah, maybe I can get him interested in keeping on with it. I'd like that. That'd be ideal. But whether that's going to work out, I don't know. (Farm 7)

One grower's family is currently transitioning to management by the next generation of family farmers. A third farm couple speaks about how their family farm has successfully shifted responsibilities to their children: "That's basically just myself and our son-in-law, who is now the proprietor. I work for him. I just don't work as many hours as I used to. He worked for us for 25 years, and now we work for him" (Farm 14).

Hired workers

Farmers who maintain an accepting attitude with hired workers try to be understanding of the needs of their employees and are often willing to adjust their management practices to fit those needs. These growers tend to place importance on worker satisfaction. Some growers demonstrate commitment to their hired help through monetary and non-monetary incentives. Others, whose incentives methods might be less formal, are sure to express their appreciation to their workers in other ways. One farmer's description of his bonus program suggests that he has been deliberate in his planning and cognizant of the fairness of the incentives arrangement:

I think for the people who go into management, we have an incentive built into our remuneration program... We take from the farm a certain percentage of gross sales and designate that for capital. Improvements, expansion, equipment and so on. And then the next 10,000 of profit, we put into a profit sharing arrangement which goes to people who helped to manage the farm. And, ah, the proportion is divided according to the, for example, it they're at a higher... Apprentices, for example, if they're in a higher stipend and work for 12 months – they would get proportionately more than for someone who's at a lower stipend and works for 6 months. So they get a fair proportion of the profit for the year. So that, instead of giving a flat bonus, we give profit sharing. (Farm 3)

Beyond a monetary award, he also offers apprentices the option to donate a percentage to a charity of their choice. This form of incentive is consistent with this particular grower's philosophy about farming, labor management, and community involvement. He

discusses his reasoning in choosing to share a significant portion of the farm's profits with employees and charities:

My philosophy has been, you know, I don't, I don't need to accumulate a lot of money for myself. I'm happy to see the farm become a viable farm and remain a viable farm into the future. Um, and I'm, my own view is I'd rather pay less or no tax, um, on the income. Find a way to reduce that as much as possible. Since most of the federal tax goes to things that I don't think are very good like defense and armaments and all kinds of things like that (laughs). So that's just my personal bias. (Farm 3)

This grower also considers the education of apprentices a major element of his obligation as their employer. He realizes that training and education requires time and effort of him but also understands the value of this "trade-off":

It's a trade-off. I guess, at my age, I don't have quite the energy. I don't have the energy that I used to have, so I can do, I can more comfortably watch somebody else do some of the hard tasks. Um, example, we pick a lot of stones. We have some really stony fields. We take the tractor with the front end loader, seven foot wide. And we just go down through the field as slow as we can, and people stand on the front edge of that loader and just toss the stones... Well, I need help to do that. You can't do it alone. You need extra help. And I figure if they're willing to help me with that very hard and laborious task, I owe it to them to give them some opportunity to learn the things they want to learn. So it's a trade-off. Um, I'm giving up some of my time for them, but they're giving up some of their, you know, strength and youthful energy to do things I can no longer do on my own. Never could probably. I thought I could, but... (laughs) So it's a trade-off. (Farm 3)

Another grower also describes how the education and training of his apprentices is an important part of his commitment to them. It is evident that he sets time aside to address the educational aspect of their job expectations:

The [daily] meeting is a time to do some educational stuff too, you know. Answer people's questions that uh, talk about the reasons, you know, why we're doing certain things, and whatever questions people have... But then there's also, we also have a meeting every Wednesday afternoon, ah, for a couple hours, where it's a more intensive training, education thing. That's like a seminar, that we sit down and talk about. (Farm 8)

Some growers take into considerations the availability and work preferences of hired workers while developing daily work schedules. These growers are not only accepting of the limitations inherent in agricultural jobs, but are also understanding of limitations that may emerge among the types of workers who perform these jobs. In order to accommodate employees' non-work obligations, professional interests, and physical comfort, they tend to be flexible with work hours and work responsibilities. One couple shows great flexibility when scheduling local teenage workers to accommodate extra-curricular activities and family vacations. Another grower tries to assign tasks to his apprentices according to their interests. He finds this attention to their job preferences gives them incentive to return for multiple seasons:

We spend a period of time in the spring, in the month of May, um, after most everybody's been here for a while, for a couple, three weeks, then we have a conf[erence]... We sit down and have a big meeting, and divide up all the responsibilities for the season. And it's a sort of process of negotiation, you know, that people say what they want and they trade off, you know, trade back and forth to each other. And they, but we try to fix it so everybody gets what they want. It usually works pretty, pretty well. People get what they want to do, and uh, then, but they understand that they have those duties for the whole season, and then hopefully they come back for another season, and they get, they can change, you know, get different duties the second season, if they want. And quite a few people do come back and ah, of the ten apprentices, um, many of them come back for more than one season. I mean, some of them come back for four or five seasons, even. (Farm 8)

Another grower talks about how, when possible, he tries to make tasks easier or more comfortable for his employees:

But what's nice about our operation is it's very diverse and there's lots of different tasks, so somebody's not going to spend all day picking strawberries... They might spend all day picking, but they'll be going from one task to another. Um, they'll, they'll pick part of the day and come in and help pack. So that's a break, because it brings them out of the sun. And you know, it's in the cool packing shed. So you know, the hottest part of the day we're doing things you know, I try to structure the

day, so that we, we're, you know, with what's happening outside obviously. But you know, try to do the, the hottest, during the hottest part of the day doing the coolest work, so to speak. (Farm 9)

Some growers recognize that simple and informal expressions of gratitude can play a significant role in workers' sense of satisfaction. Growers who acknowledge the value of saying "thank you" do so in various ways. Formal and informal incentives like those described earlier in this chapter are practical for some farmers. Some participant farmers also place much importance on daily forms of appreciation. One farming couple describes how they try to ensure that their employees understand they are grateful for their commitment and hard work: "And I'm constantly saying, 'Wow, that was really good. We appreciate you're doing that,' and you know 'Boy, that really helps us'" (Farm 2, husband). Another grower echoes this sentiment of gratitude when she speaks about her appreciation of seasonal helpers: "We're also very grateful for them because we realize how hard it is to work seasonally. You know, and we're so happy that somebody comes and is going to work for two or three months" (Farm 5, wife). She goes on to describe how she and her husband express this gratitude:

And I think the key there is the success as a team, 'cause I really think, you know more than the money what they like is, I think they like to be appreciated. And [my husband] and I pretty much say thanks every day to... you know, if we see them leave we say, "Hey thanks a lot," you know. Or in the morning, "Hey we're really glad to see you." You know, I think that and then realizing that things come up in their lives and being flexible. I think those are very good management things that we do well. (Farm 5, wife)

Growers who espouse accepting and proactive outlooks toward farm labor describe social interactions with hired workers as enjoyable and enriching experiences. These employers tend to place emphasis on sociality and create a family-oriented or social atmosphere. One farming couple, who ultimately have difficulty with the social

aspects of hosting an intern on their farm, have made the effort to incorporate workers in some of their home routines and recognize the value of successful social relationships:

Wife: And that's part of what we want out of having interns, is that social interaction too.

Husband: When we have those people that click, it really adds to our quality of life. To have an intern here that's not only working with me out there during the day, but also being a part of our family and seeing how it all fits together. (Farm 10)

Another farming couple has hired many local people, as well as foreign or immigrant workers who temporarily resided in their area. They describe how the diversity of their work crews over the years has afforded them many interesting experiences. "It's been very interesting," says the wife (Farm 14). They describe their particular appreciation of interactions with a Russian family that picked apples for them one year and a Brazilian woman who picked for a season. In both instances, they describe how these workers offered them a "lesson in humility" (Farm 14, husband), as well as a cultural learning experience. One mid-sized farm operator describes how his family and hired immigrant workers develop a bond during the summer months, which makes their parting in the autumn rather emotional: "And when they leave, you know, they want to make sure, they want my wife and the kids here, you know. They shake hands and all this crap... But it's nice. It's kind of family-oriented. That's what it is" (Farm 13).

A woman farmer in a husband/wife team describes how a family atmosphere, largely due to her own family's participation in work tasks, seems to create a level of comfort in the orchard, particularly for female employees: "Well, and the other thing that I always said from the beginning is, we have women picking. But I think it's because

we're out there picking too. You know, it's ah, like [my daughter] and I, we're out there, we're out there every day too" (Farm 14, wife).

Local community

Experiences with finding reliable and willing local workers vary greatly among growers in the sample. Issues regarding the employment of local residents represent a very perceptible divide between growers with accepting management perspectives and those with more resistant approaches. These divergent viewpoints are expressed in growers' different levels of willingness to hire local employees, as well as their varying levels of patience in training them. Some farmers demonstrate considerable dedication to the task of finding locals for seasonal and year-round employment. They do so by showing they are willing to invest time, energy, and financial resources in the recruitment and training of community members. This often requires tolerance of different types of local workers including teenagers and adults, as well as willingness to accommodate these individuals' schedules and work preferences.

Growers with open-minded attitudes first demonstrate that their jobs are available to members of the local community. This can be observed in the ways they recruit workers and how they respond to locals who approach them for work. For example, some growers obtain many of their employees through word of mouth within their community. This demonstrates their openness to hiring local residents, as well as their adaptability to unplanned hiring opportunities. One vegetable farming couple gives some insight into how their informal mode of hiring, characterized by a pro-active approach toward labor challenges and opportunities, has benefited their farm in the past:

Well we've just had interesting people over the years. We've had a lot of people who are over educated for the job. Um, people who see us at farmers markets. We had a young guy once from [a nearby town] who just wanted to challenge himself. Um, you know we have kids that shop with us who, you know, have a love of plants and we say, well, when you turn 14, see if you want a job, and they'll show up. Um, so it's just, some of it's just proximity. And some then, some I guess we do pursue, or we've seen this person like someone we're hoping will help out our sales staff. I just, her husband buys plants from us for the [town] borough and I met her through our church and just in chit-chatting, she said she was, um, you know, not working a lot and, you know, you get a sense of people. Or this other woman that I did PTA stuff with. I don't know. What else do you think? We've never really advertized. (Farm 5, wife)

Good relationships with neighbors can also yield positive experiences with locals. One farmer who lives in a very rural area talks about how several neighborhood children have all helped on the farm:

We have a family that had three girls, we've gone through all three girls. We have another family that has two girls and we went through both of those girls. Now we're starting with a third family (laughs), and they have one girl, just in high school, and two small, younger ones, so maybe they'll last for a while. (Farm 6)

Teenagers are often regarded as one of the most unreliable and irresponsible types of workers, particularly for farm work where physical and mental endurance are a requisite. Nevertheless, some growers adopt a more positive outlook when hiring teenage workers. These growers recognize the potential challenges of working with young people and develop strategies to work around those challenges. For example, one farmer actively seeks out students he perceives as being strong and energetic workers.

I coach the high school soccer team at [the] High School, and I will ah... You get to assess kids. And so the coolest, most... you know the ones that look like they're going to work the hardest... I say, "Hey, do you want a job?" And so for years we've had a soccer player or two here. (Farm 5, husband)

On this same farm, the owners understand that students' availability in the summer complements their seasonal work needs. Therefore, they are willing to be flexible with vacations and other summer obligations to accommodate these workers. They are able to adapt their work routines and assign tasks that suit the seasonal needs of teenage workers:

Husband: I mean we go around their schedule. Like this spring, all three of them are involved in musical (laughs). No two of them are in the musical and one's in track.

Wife: Yeah, and one's getting her black belt.

Husband: So yeah, you just have to work around all that. But it's not that you have to fill the pots at a certain time. You can, you know, get them all done a day ahead. There's flexibility and that sort of makes it easier to hire a kid like that. (Farm 5)

One theme that emerged from interviews with several farmers concerns how the general public's idealism plays a role in some job applications. Some individuals are attracted to farm work for idealistic reasons including the popular appeal of local and organic agriculture and the romance associated with farming. Growers recognize that some of these ideals do not always account for the difficulties that accompany farm employment like the physicality of the work. One farmer, however, shows her willingness to seize the opportunities offered by such idealistic employees. She sees their idealism as a benefit, rather than a drawback:

I think that definitely, it's the whole "local" you know sustainable organic food movement has a lot of caché at this point too. It's the fastest growing sector of the market. People want it. They're demanding it. They're, you know, all those things. So, it's um, there's an appeal about it. There's a mystique about it. You know, there's something wholesome and modest about it. That's, and I think, attractive to, you know, maybe young families, young mothers, young, you know... So I think it's kind of a good time, actually. I mean not that people are losing their jobs. I don't think that's good, but I think that the ultimate effect it could have on agriculture could be positive. That it may bring more people to agriculture that may not have ever thought about being in agriculture before. (Farm 1)

Regulatory organizations

None of the growers in the sample relish the idea of keeping track of more paperwork for legal reasons or for regulatory agencies. Some farmers, however, show more acceptance of these requirements than others and seem to adapt to regulations more easily. As mentioned earlier, one couple keeps detailed records of all of their employees. They do so primarily for liability reasons. This couple also obliges with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification requirements. Despite the initial effort and “hassle” it demanded of them, they underwent the certification process with the understanding that once in place, the practices they adopted for the GAP program would benefit their farm operation: “It was a lot of work, yes. But we’re ready to go now, whenever [the inspector] comes again” (Farm 14, wife).

Some participant growers also expressed frustration with the obligation to provide lodging for certain kinds of employees, particularly migrant workers or interns. Growers showing more accepting approaches toward housing regulations tend to see the benefit in providing housing in order to accommodate these worker types. For example one grower invested in a permanent structure designed to house eight migrant workers. Other farmers have been able to locate or construct housing options on their farms or in the local area to supply rooms for migrant workers or apprentices. Providing lodging, however, is a challenge other growers recognize, but have difficulty accommodating because of financial restraints. One small-scale vegetable grower has considered lower-cost housing options to overcome these restraints. He also recognizes the challenges associated with these options and the limitations associated with more desirable lodging arrangements:

That's the problem with interns. You do have to put them somewhere. And there again, you know, we're putting up a yurt... Which is fine for some people, but for a lot of people it isn't. You want to put up something nice, you're looking at 30 thousand dollars. If you're going to spend 30 thousand dollars, you better be at a size where you can absorb that.

As a compromise, this farmer is considering hiring international agricultural interns from South America, whose housing expectations might be more consistent with what he feels he can provide.

B. Resistant responses toward labor challenges

Characterization of resistant approaches

Some participant farmers appear to engage more resistant or passive approaches when dealing with farm labor challenges. They seem less interested or motivated to change their management practices to deal with certain limitations related to farm labor. With regards to employment incentives, some of the growers in this group offer few incentives to their workers above and beyond necessary wages. In their interviews, they express more frustration with regulations and financial limitations that restrict their capacity to offer incentives.

Some growers who demonstrate resistant attitudes also reveal that they do not always cope well with interpersonal interaction with their workers. These farmers tend to micromanage their employees, place very little trust in their ability to work without supervision, or give them very little decision-making responsibility. One grower, for example, frequently checks the quality and efficiency of his hired employees throughout the workday. He attributes this tendency toward heavy supervision partly to his "micromanager" (Farm 10) personality: "Because we direct market, I feel like I need to really have my finger on the pulse. And that when I check that out, and convey that, then

I can go away, and do something else... And I'm partly just a control freak" (Farm 10, husband). He also feels this management style is necessary for his small-scale business to remain viable:

I end up having my fingers in everything. Which, partly, enables us to be economically viable. We've tried before having more help and me just kind of letting go and letting it happen. It doesn't work, at this scale. You know, if you're doing, you know, if we were doing five times the business, I think probably that would work. Because it would be, because there's not enough of me to go around. (Farm 10, husband)

This grower and others cite negative prior experiences with employees as a reason for their lack of trust in most workers. These farmers have had experiences with inattentive, inefficient, or uninterested employees. For example, one grower expresses his frustration with previous workers who do not seem to pay attention to the quality of their work:

But it is difficult to sort of keep your attention and decide that you're going to do this right. I can go through like a patch of kale and say ok, now you're going to help me pick this kale. And you're going to bunch it, and I'm going to show you how to bunch it, and I'm going to show you which leaves to pick, and which leaves to pull off and throw away. And I can go over that, and go over that, and go over that, but people will inevitably pick a really crappy bunch of kale. They will do it. Because they just want to get the job, you know, "I got to get this job done." It's like, pay attention, because if you don't pay attention, we're going to be back in the packing shed, doing more work. (Farm 9)

In some cases, farmers may have too much interaction with employees, which can result in tension and stress between them. One grower sometimes senses dissatisfaction with his workers when he interacts with them frequently throughout the day:

There's a lot of interaction, and I think partly that's where a lot of the problem comes. Because, I'm always, not only minute by minute, but over the course of a day, I'm giving them 12 or 20 different explicit instructions of what to do. And I think a lot of people think you know, they're just going to be out in the nice weather... So they don't want this guy in their face all day long. (Farm 10, husband)

Other growers may have too little interaction with workers and manage their employees from a distance. This hands-off or less sociable kind of relationship with hired help may be a disincentive for current and prospective employees. Very few participant growers seem to take this approach with workers. However these few tend to have difficulty retaining workers from the local community. Instead, they prefer to employ migrant workers, who seem to require less training, supervision, and other forms of interpersonal interaction. One grower describes his relatively detached approach to communicating tasks to his Spanish-speaking workers: “Like I said, usually there’s one or two that know English... So I just tell them, and they tell the rest” (Farm 15).

Faced with the challenges of attracting and retaining hired workers, growers whose management perspectives are resistant or less committed tend to invest less time and effort in their recruitment and incentives activities. Even when they recognize that previous methods have not been successful, some farmers do not seem open to new or unorthodox ways of finding help. Some participant growers lean heavily on traditional worker types like teenagers and migrant workers, but have not investigated other options in their local communities like retired individuals, non-working mothers, or interns. For example, one farmer’s workforce has been comprised primarily of teenagers and migrant workers, and he has largely been dissatisfied with his labor situations. A farming couple in a nearby community has had much greater success attracting workers of very different backgrounds to work on their farm, performing similar work tasks.

Growers with resistant attitudes also express resentment and frustration with governmental organizations and regulatory agencies, often blaming them for limitations on their management options. They seem more resistant than other farmers to adjusting

their practices to accommodate new rules and regulations. One grower expresses his frustration with requirements associated with the GAP program, and how these regulations have caused him stress and disheartenment:

Sometimes, you know, in the middle of harvest, I think, why do I do this? And in fact, I'm reaching a point where even with labor, I'm having headaches with this GAP deal. It's like, sometimes I think I've been doing this too long. Time for a change... I'm serious... I just feel like the last few years, I've been losing my ambition a little bit. Just too many obstacles. (Farm 15)

In this study, resistant or reluctant responses to labor-related challenges are often directly related to previous negative experiences with employees or working arrangements. Farmers perceive that their decisions and actions are justified by practical reasons for adopting defensive responses to these issues. They respond in ways they deem necessary for the survival and success of their farms and businesses. In the following section, I present examples of specific challenges that participant growers face as they interact with family, hired workers, local community members, and regulatory agencies. I also discuss resistant responses to those challenges.

Influential social actors

Family

Growers who espouse more resistant attitudes toward labor challenges describe how their management practices affect their own work and the responsibilities of family members. Often, because of resistance to hiring extra help or designating certain tasks to hired employees, farmers take on more work and longer hours for themselves and their family members. Although it is understood and accepted that farm operators and farm families generally perform more work on the farm than individual hired employees,

growers with resistant perspectives have a tendency to expand their workloads to the point of adding stress and frustration to the family labor situation. In these circumstances, growers may be influenced by the availability and abilities of family members, but their labor decisions also have direct implications on their families.

Several farmers describe how they offset an inadequate hired workforce with an increase in their own family's labor. One grower describes how he works more because they have very little hired help:

Especially as we get older, you know, don't have quite the vitality. I mean, there for a while, especially once it'd get real hot, and I'd feel so tired, and I'd wonder really why I was so tired, you know. I can't even do any reading in the evening before I go to bed. I'd just fall asleep. So I started counting up how many hours I'd work in a day. Then I could understand it. (Farm 7)

One vegetable grower reserves certain highly skilled tasks for himself or his son, such as spraying with a tractor-mounted sprayer. He does this partly because of the knowledge and experience required for operating the tractor and sprayers and partly because much of this work is best performed in the evening hours. Because of the flexibility built into family labor arrangements, his son assumes this particular task. He describes the long and late hours his son spends on the tractor:

If you've only got one guy doing the spraying, it's going, you're going to spend, four nights, if not five nights a week, and that is what, when I say nights, he'll work most of the day, then sometimes he'll take off at four and go home, and start spraying at seven, and go to twelve or later... He kind of works two shifts. (Farm 13)

For some growers, it is not necessarily a lack of help but the perceived unreliability of hired help, which creates more work for themselves. These growers do not place much trust in their employees or do not feel comfortable giving them decision-making responsibilities or highly skilled job tasks. One grower, a self-described micromanager,

describes his own resistance to hiring outside the family, as well as the increased work it requires of him:

There's no question whatsoever that the size of our business and the nature of our business is largely dictated by labor concerns. And what we, either what we can get, because we're so isolated, or what I'm willing to deal with. And so, this is, this is a, a small and very borderline operation. Largely because I have not been able to find, ah, a hired labor source that works for me. Beyond my family. So that the default position, which I'm often very happy to resort to, is just the family, and me working more. (Farm 10, husband)

This grower explicitly states that it is his own reluctance to hire non-family workers that has shaped his farm management plans:

Although, honestly, what we're doing now is, we're changing the nature of our farm, to make it less likely that we need to hire. Other than, I mean there will always be the need to hire, to have some extra hands at planting time, and in the fall, for harvest of the storage crops. But we're, we're really changing our crop mix, and everything, so that it's more likely that I can do this with, [my wife] and I and hopefully [her] sister, as long as she's willing to do it. And our children, whenever they're willing to come for whatever part of the season there is. It's not the same – I mean if... if this guy comes and we hire him and it works, that will be great. And if some other intern situation, you know, somebody that I already know, that wants to, that's thinking about a career change, and I already know that I get along with them good and I like them, and they want to come, and they can actually do hard work. I'm not saying I wouldn't ever have an intern again, or an hourly person again. But we're trying to make it so that that's not a necessary requirement for us to, to be able to do this. I'd like to be able to do this with just us. And if a pair of extra hands turns up for two months, and it seems like it's going to be good, we can always, we can always use two more hands. But, we're actually trying to, we're changing the way we farm, to try to reduce the need for non-family labor. (Farm 10, husband)

It is also worth noting that during the sampling stage of the study, several contacted growers responded that they managed their farms without hired workers outside of the family. One grower spoke at some length about his reluctance to hire non-family employees because of added burden of managing hired workers. He explained

how this approach required more work hours of himself and his family members. He also described specific technologies he has adopted so that he and his family could handle the workload. Specifically, he mentioned tractor-drawn transplanting equipment to minimize the need for manual labor and electric lighting in his greenhouse to allow him to work after dark. As a result of his own reluctance to manage hired labor, he has intensified the amount of time and energy required of himself and his family members to complete farm work.

Hired workers

Nearly every farmer in the study recalled at least one negative experience with a hired worker or workers. Growers demonstrate different levels of acceptance or resistance to these challenges and various ways of responding to them. Several growers in the sample express difficulty coping with the challenges they face when hiring workers outside the family. In most cases, their frustration with hired help is shaped by experiences with unreliable or incapable workers. These negative experiences have shaped their perceptions of hired help, to a point where they resent the added stress in dealing with them.

Some farmers are frustrated with the undependability of certain kinds of hired help. These growers share stories of workers who do not respect their work schedules or leave during the middle of the growing season. For some farmers, the difficulty of finding reliable workers has been a chronic issue. One farmer describes the extent to which he has experienced this challenge on his farm:

You get people that...don't have jobs. And most of them people, there's a reason they don't have that job. I've learned that. The reason they don't

have a job is 'cause they can't hold a job... So you get the ones that really don't care. They show up whenever they want. (Farm 15)

Growers who have negative perceptions of workers' abilities often find fault in their work ethic. These farmers tend to compare employees' attitudes toward work to their own principles and their own motivation to work hard. Several growers made this comparison with resentment of hired workers' relatively weak work ethic. One farmer contrasts the working habits of employees with how hard he and his own family have worked over the years: "I was taught, boy, if you didn't work straight through, and you never took a rest. You didn't spend your time leaning on the handle of a fork or something. You kept very busy" (Farm 11, husband). One vegetable grower laments how many of his local workers do not know how to work hard or are unwilling to do farm work:

Native born Americans are lazy, most of them. That's just the truth. Their nutrition, their diet, is so poor it takes all of their spark and gumption out. Then they're only good for lounging about convenience stores, selling cigarettes. It's pathetic. You know, I mean, in truth maybe nobody's lazy, but it sure seems that way when you're trying to get them to pick beans. (Farm 4)

Another farmer explains how he values the work ethic of people who were raised on farms:

Yet I've done other things besides farm in my life. But now having this perspective, and I think I've read this or heard this somewhere else, if I were an employer in any other business, especially one that made use of some of the skills, and I'm just thinking of construction or something, if I heard, if I had a chance to hire somebody that grew up on a farm, they moved way, way up on the list. Just because I'm thinking, they know how to work. (Farm 10, husband)

Several farmers express frustration with hired employees' physical inability to perform certain farm tasks. They often appreciate these individuals' willingness to work

but are exasperated by their physical limitations. One vegetable grower recounts his experiences with an employee who was unaccustomed to the physical nature of farm work:

She was not physically capable of the work and, at one point, she got like, heat stroke, you know? And people just won't listen, when you say, put on a hat. Or, go in and drink some water. They just don't know how to deal with physical labor and really stressful conditions. 'Cause they haven't had to. And so, she, you know, she worked for a couple months, and had to leave. You know, so that was bad, in that respect. Not that she was not a good worker, it's just that she was incapable of doing the work. (Farm 9)

The same grower shares a story that reflects how he considers physical ability when interviewing potential workers who might be prone to injury or exhaustion:

It took me a while to figure out that you just don't hire people right off the bat. And you, you make certain decisions right away, as to whether you're going to take this person on. Like I did have, like I said, people who were not physically capable of doing things. And you know, I had this one guy, who really wanted to work, but he just like could not do anything. Physically. He just couldn't do it. After a day, I thought he was going to die. (laughs) I thought, you know, you can't work here. You can't work here. You can't pick up a bucket of water. You can't work here. Ah, because, I don't want to be responsible for your death. (laughs) (Farm 9)

Some growers who are resistant to hiring workers seem uncomfortable with social interaction with their workers. They describe interpersonal interaction with hired help as a potentially burdensome experience that can be a cause of stress or frustration. One farming couple explain how the husband often resents the task of managing hired help because of the time and effort it requires of him:

Husband: Well, if somebody's standing out there waiting for a job, it's, it becomes the top of my list like that. Um, I'm not good at paying people to stand and wait for me to tell them what to do.

Wife: Yeah, that often is a pain for you. He loses his flexibility. That if he needs to sit at his desk at nine o'clock, and someone is getting ready, is

waiting, he's not going to make those phone calls. He'll have to be out there. And that's hard.

Husband: When labor is here, it, making the best use of it, becomes one of my highest priorities...

Wife: And that's stressful. That's pretty stressful for you, I think, in some way. (Farm 10)

Another farmer talks about how the presence of employees on the farm intrudes upon his family's sense of privacy. This is why he chooses not to employ interns who would live on the farm:

I've never really done interns. Uh, we've always sort of avoided it, because we kind of guard our privacy pretty jealously, pretty closely. And you know, we don't want to live with other people. You know. They would have to be part of our family, and we don't, really don't want that... I can see how it's difficult, and it's difficult for us, it's difficult for us, but I can see that it definitely puts a strain on the family. Um, 'cause all of the sudden, you're responsible for someone, in really very, um... undefined ways. Ah, that you wouldn't expect. (Farm 9)

Local community

Several growers in the sample express frustration with the availability and quality of help they are able to find in their local communities. Farmers whose attitude toward these challenges is characterized by resistance share stories about negative experiences with local employees. They cite problems with local residents' unwillingness to work seasonally, perform farm work, or work for wages and benefits farmers feel they can afford. Some of these growers feel that local people do not have a strong work ethic and tend not to be reliable workers. They cite problems dealing with certain types of local workers including teenagers, idealistic individuals, and marginal members of society.

Several participant farmers are resistant to hiring teenage workers. These growers tend to have a negative perception of the work ethic of young people in their local communities. One small-scale vegetable farmer describes his outlook on contemporary teenagers and their unwillingness to perform farm work:

I hate to sound like an old fogey about this, because you know, I used, I used to hate people talking like this. But it's, it's really true. When we first started we were able to hire some really good hard-working kids. Because you know, they, kids pounding on our door, asking for a job. And then after a while, we'd get kids pounding on our door, asking for a job, and they'd last two days. Or, you know, they didn't show up. Or, you know, they got their paycheck or whatever it was, and that was enough for them, because they were going to go get drunk with their friends that night. You know, that kind of thing you have to deal with. It's sort of a cultural thing too. (Farm 9)

Another grower explains why he feels local teenagers are less than ideal workers. He attempts to describe why teens tend to be unreliable or mediocre workers when compared to more mature employees:

I mean, people have been complaining about youth ever since there were youth. But, it seems to be true... And also, here with the kind of work you're doing where you're out there, it's 90 degrees, and you're hunched over picking peppers, your back starts to hurt and then a swarm of gnats descends on you... (laughs) And, you can say it's physically unpleasant. But if you're kind of aware that what you're doing is feeding people wholesome food, that really takes the edge off. And I think that's easier for a mature person to keep in mind and to really feel. You know, they know why you're doing it. And youth just doesn't have that wisdom. I mean I remember when I was 18, I thought the world was my playground, you know, put there just for my personal amusement. You know that's just a characteristic of youth, it's nothing against them. (Farm 4)

Some growers also expressed frustration with contemporary social norms and parenting styles that have produced young people who are unwilling to work hard. Hiring students is already a challenge because of their limited availability in the autumn months, but summer activities and vacations also present scheduling issues for

employers. One grower cites this conflict as a reason for avoiding the employment of teenage workers. He ultimately contrasts the perceived unreliability of teens with the stronger work ethic of his own generation:

I would say, it's not always easy to find boys that will work. They want to play around with, you know – and one of the biggest problems we have with high school students now, is that, the better ones, are, they're at field hockey camp, basketball camp. All these camps during the summer. Or they've got, their family's going on vacation. So you've got, a lot of these people, and even these girls we have now, you line up these people to work, and then they say, well now, family's going to the shore next week. Well, gee, what are we going to do at the market? And then they say, I've got band camp. And then college starts in the middle of August, and then they're leaving for that. So that's a little bit different than it used to be. When I was a kid, you know, we had to work. We didn't have vacations. You know what I mean? (Farm 6)

Other growers articulate frustration with the social norms that no longer place job commitment as a priority for young people. This trend, they argue, diminishes teenagers' sense of responsibility or reliability. One orchard owner blames parents for this tendency and, as a result, has taken active measures to discontinue hiring teens:

We're taking on the course of new high school kids. We've been trying to use high school kids over the years, and ah, mothers and fathers are ruining their kids. And we've gotten to the point now that ah, their productivity has dropped too low for their value. You know, Mom and Dad want to go on vacation, and we're picking strawberries, they go on vacation whether they lose their job or not. Mom and Dad don't think that Johnny should be out in the sun today, 'cause he'd rather go to a amusement park. And the parents won't back you up and say, you have to show up to work. So this year... pretty much every high school kid is not even going to get an application. (Farm 12)

Furthermore, some farmers express frustration with the issues they encounter with farm labor because of the general public's idealized perception of farming. They claim that community members who are attracted to farm work for romanticized reasons rarely

understand the difficulty of the work. One grower describes his perception of this type of worker whose expectations of farm work are not realistic:

The types of tasks we have are very different, than say, a dairy farm or a farm that's growing a commodity crop or hay or grains. Um, and those, actually, those are the kind of jobs people like, because they can sit on the tractor and go. You know, if it's a nice tractor, with a good stereo system, man, they've got it made... It's really incredibly boring. And, but you know, to tell you the truth, what we do is much more interesting. But it is hard. It's hard, to, to have to do certain things. Um, and we do a lot of manual labor. Again, I like I said, that's what makes it difficult sometimes, finding someone. (Farm 9)

Another grower echoes this sentiment when he describes an experience where he lost an employee due to unrealistic expectations:

You know, we have people call up and say, my son would like to work on the farm. Well we've tried that, and you know, the last one we had lasted two hours and then, my wife went to town and here he is walking to town. He, you know, he wasn't going to hoe, and uh, they'll drive a tractor. They'd like to do that, you see. They think that's farming. But, that's not farming. (Farm 6)

Some growers who have had difficulty finding qualified local teenagers or adults to work on their farms have resorted to hiring more marginal elements of society. One orchardist describes his experiences with these groups: "It's been nightmares sometimes. I went from calling the unemployment office years ago to hiring people on work release from prison. Both of them were nightmares. They just won't show up, or work a half a day and leave" (Farm 15). This type of employment strategy often represents a last effort to hire local American workers.

Asked if there is anything he would change about his current labor management practices, one grower responded, "I guess, the bottom line is, if the white person would work, even close to as good as a Mexican on average, I would hire them every day. I wouldn't have no Mexicans. But, in the situation that everything is, the farmer has no

choice” (Farm 13). This kind of frustration finding local workers has led many farmers to turn to local immigrant populations because they perceive them to be more willing to do seasonal work on farms. Most growers who hire immigrant workers are satisfied with their availability, reliability, and quality of work. So in these circumstances, farmers who have resistant attitudes about hiring local American workers, often show a higher level of acceptance when hiring immigrant workers. These growers justify their reliance on this worker type, not only because of the difficulty finding local workers, but also for other reasons including perceptions of these individuals’ strong work ethic. One grower is passionate about the work ethic of the Dominican workers he employs and resentful of the discrimination against them he perceives in the local community:

And they wanna’ work. Local people, we, sometimes you can’t get to work... I get very passionate about it, because, you know, these people are good people and they want to better their life, just like my grandparents did when they came from Germany. Same difference.
(Farm 6)

Several farmers describe how immigrant workers are grateful for farm work opportunities and work hard to improve their families’ circumstances. One vegetable grower takes comfort in knowing he is helping his workers in this way: “These people...you can have a 20-year-old guy, and out of 450 bucks, I bet you he will send 400 bucks to Mexico. They do it every week. They’re very ah, family, whatever you want to call it. Send it back to their parents” (Farm 13).

Regulatory organizations

Several participant growers expressed frustration with regulations that pertain to farm labor. Some farmers feel that certain regulations create an unnecessary burden for small-scale farm operators. Others are resentful of the amount of paperwork that is

required of them in order to hire non-family employees. While some growers are able to accept these restrictions, others are more vocal about their opposition to certain labor regulations.

The main complaint among farmers with regards to labor regulations concerns the additional time and effort required to keep track of paperwork associated with worker documentation, labor laws, and certain types of certifications. For example, three growers spoke about the anxiety they experienced while trying to fulfill GAP certification requirements. One grower expresses his aggravation with the amount of extra work the process demanded of him:

Everything has to be documented. You know, when that john job is cleaned. Ah, if anybody cut themselves out in the orchard, it has to be documented. Yeah. If anybody has symptoms of any virus that would cause diarrhea or anything, it has to be documented. Everything has to be documented. I'm going to have 20 clipboards hanging around. (Farm 15)

Legal liability is a stress-causing factor for growers as they consider the rules and regulations associated with labor management. Several farmers mentioned the risks involved in being audited or sued if they knowingly or unknowingly fail to meet documentation requirements. One grower describes one experience he had with an undocumented employee he had hired during a critical time of the season:

Yeah, and if one of them gets hurt, then I'm in trouble – you know, it's like...either way, what do you do? Let your crop fall on the ground? ... Or do you hire workers that want paid cash, and you have no record of them... And I had one guy one time, he fell and I don't know if he hurt his back or not... I was worried for a long time, thinking, you know, what's this, what's this going to turn into? ... But I remember I was thinking, you know... is this going to haunt me for months? (Farm 15)

Growers who hired immigrant or migrant workers face certain risks associated with the legal status of their employment. Participant farmers who hire immigrants on an

occasional or regular basis claim they require documentation of employees' legal status. Some of these growers, however, still fear legal repercussions if it turns out their workers' papers are not legitimate. One orchardist argues that he should not be held responsible for this eventuality: "But I can't say if the green card's good or the Social Security card's good. That's not my job. Never should be my job. They were yammering the other night about how it should be our job. We're not law enforcement officers" (Farm 12).

Several employers also complain about additional financial costs associated with workers' compensation and unemployment benefits. These growers argue that farm employers, and particularly small farm operators, should be exempt from some of these governmental regulations. One grower feels that it is unfair for small-scale growers to be treated the same way as larger farm operations:

Paying somebody else to come onto the farm, it's not so much the wage itself, but all the, for us it's all the added extra stuff that we have to do legally. Ah, namely workman's compensation and taxes. Which, you know, it's part of having a business. You know, I understand that, but um, ah, the government sort of paints, you know, agriculture with the same brush. You know, we're, for workman's compensation especially, we're just lumped in with everybody else in agriculture. There's no distinction between us and say, like, a big farm. So we're paying a minimum amount based on our, on our, ah, what we pay in wages. But it's a burden sometimes, (laughs) so there have been some years I've paid people more than we've made. And that's, that's kind of frustrating, kind of tough. (Farm 9)

Another farmer expresses his frustration with unemployment regulations and their failure to accommodate the unique seasonal labor needs in agriculture:

You would think, logically, a seasonal job, that they wouldn't be allowed to draw unemployment on a job that, when they know, when they come to the job, they know it's going to be only a four month period, or a six month period or a two month period. But the law in Pennsylvania says that, that doesn't affect their eligibility at all. Now, there's only a couple

of very, very very small categories, namely the only one I know of actually is canning plants, you know... Yeah. You know, because of their history, they've got those, they've got those in a special little category. So you can't go and work in a canning factory that's, you know, canning seasonal vegetables or something, and expect to draw unemployment. But that ought to be, that ought to be extended to anybody that's completely a seasonal job, and ah. Because you know, it just doesn't really make sense, that they would be able to...you know, they can work for us for a really short time, and go back and draw unemployment for a very long time, you know. (Farm 8)

5. Analysis of findings: risk and response in farm labor management

In considering these two sets of divergent patterns in labor management – 1) formal and informal management styles and 2) accepting and resistant responses to challenge and change – it is important to learn about the relationships between these different approaches to gain a deeper understanding of how growers perceive and experience farm labor challenges. In this section, I strive to identify and analyze key themes that link the various findings outlined above. Specifically, I address four major concepts that are woven throughout key findings from the interview data: risk, flexibility, trust, and work ethic. In turn, I describe relationships regarding these central themes. I also return to the concepts of structure and agency and address how they relate to the driving themes of risk and response in growers' labor management decisions.

Risk

Risk represents a major contextual component of farmers' labor management decisions. Farm operators develop perceptions about labor issues and share experiences with workers against a backdrop of various challenges. These include risks associated with the biological and seasonal nature of farming; market uncertainties and the financial costs of hired help; and other labor-related risks regarding the reliability, efficiency, and

quality of employees' performance. The concept of risk also represents some of the structural limitations growers consider in their daily and long-term labor management plans. Growers' agency also comes into play in the ways they cope with various manifestations of risk.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the biological nature of farming creates significant uncertainty when dealing with hired workers. The seasonal confines of much farm work require that growers plan for the relative long-term. Essentially, they are often thinking about the next season or the next year and how they will fill their labor needs. However, biological uncertainties also arise on a more short-term basis, as farmers make daily work plans for themselves and their employees. One grower describes some of her frustration with these uncertainties:

But then we wonder if you can really do that better because this business is so biological. I mean plants grow when they grow. I mean you have some idea, but some days, some things all the sudden are ready and you think – or everything's ready, and you have to pick and choose what to transplant. Or, like [my husband] said, it's a beautiful day and you have to take advantage of the weather. So then everything in the greenhouse gets put back. It gets behind and, so sometimes I wonder how much structured we could be because you don't know what the weather or the plants are gonna do. (Farm 5, wife)

Other types of risk factors are related to market conditions and the financial restraints of individual farm businesses. Participant growers are cognizant of these limitations and try their best to balance their labor costs with other expenses associated with the farm and business. As discussed above, some growers feel very restricted in how much hired help they can afford and the kinds of wages and incentives they can offer their employees. Some growers, however, have been able to overcome these financial uncertainties by careful planning and thoughtful consideration of their own ideals. One

grower, in particular, has followed his own philosophy about labor management to develop a higher-cost, yet profitable, labor arrangement where he provides what he feels are generous wages and benefits to his farm apprentices, managers, and hourly workers. He recognizes the risks associated with small-farm labor management, but feels small farm operators can overcome them if they invest wisely in their workforces:

But the biggest mistake they always make, those smaller ones, is that they think, they always think that they're so small, they can't afford to have anybody working for them, or that they should have, they can only afford the bare minimum. You know, and they always make the mistake, ah, that they starve themselves for employees. And we just, you know, we don't make that mistake. We have enough employees. And that's because we know we can afford them, because we know that they're worth what we pay them, so ah, but that's, you know, if you had any mission or whatever from your project, my opinion would be to, you know, try to encourage these small growers, 'cause there are a lot more small growers all the time. Encourage them to think about, in terms of more like a, other businesses. Where, you know, your production pays for your labor, and you can't get production without labor. I mean, it's a vicious cycle that an awful lot of people get into. They just have failure after failure, because they don't have enough labor. So they're never going to be able to afford it, because they're never going to have any income. (Farm 8)

In this case and others in the sample, there is not only a recognition of risks and uncertainties, but also calculated methods of coping with them. This grower, aligning his labor management decisions with his personal and professional values, has incorporated sufficient flexibility and trust into his labor arrangements to help mitigate the risks associated with nature- and market-related limitations. Other farmers in the sample exhibit differing capacities for trust and flexibility in their labor management practices, while espousing a shared strong dedication to hard work and commitment to farming.

Flexibility

Flexibility, in at least some shape or form, is an important coping response for participant farmers when faced with substantial risk. Flexibility requires farmers' openness to many options along every stage of labor management decision-making processes and in response to their interactions with various key social actors (i.e. family, hired workers, local community, regulatory organizations). Flexibility also entails the ability to adapt to various challenges and changes on the farm that might affect labor arrangements. As discussed earlier, some growers demonstrate more flexibility than others. However, given the elements of risk described above, every farm operator demonstrates at least some flexibility in their management of workers.

Farm operators, farm women, and family members exhibit exceptional adaptability by undertaking work responsibilities on and off the farm. This flexibility requires farm families to work unusual or long hours, accomplish productive and non-productive farm tasks, absorb farm work that hired workers do not perform, and take on off-farm employment. As the study's findings suggest, some growers also show flexibility in the ways they locate, attract and retain local and non-local hired workers. On the other hand, some growers demonstrate more rigidity in their management practices. These farmers cite negative experiences with hired employees to justify their less flexible management styles. Their relative inflexibility is evidenced in the limited trust they place in their workers regarding their skills and reliability. These growers tend to contrast what they perceive to be workers' inadequate abilities and motivations to their own strong work ethics. Their inflexibility or impatience with hired workers, in turn, often translates to increased demand and required adaptability of family workers.

It is possible that informal methods of labor management are more flexible than formal methods, and that accepting approaches are more flexible than resistant attitudes. However, flexible labor management methods are present in both formal and informal management styles and by farmers who tend to be more accepting or more resistant in their responses to labor challenges. Growers' need to be flexible, in fact, is integral to the definition of these divergences as continuums rather than dichotomies. Adaptable combinations of management styles and modes of response seem to be essential for dealing with the risks associated with farming and employing farm workers.

While individual farmers draw on different values and experiences to inform their labor decisions, all participant growers exhibit a mixture of formal and informal approaches, as well as accepting and resistant attitudes, in their labor practices. All farmers in the sample demonstrate some level of flexibility in their labor management decisions, either in their incentives practices, their recruitment strategies, their interactions with workers, the kinds of employees they hire, or their responses to individual workers' circumstances. Their practical experiences with trial and error influence their decisions as they learn to adapt to the challenges and opportunities they encounter with labor issues. Furthermore, their own beliefs about farming and farm work shape the ways they adapt to various labor challenges.

Trust

Trust, a major component of growers' philosophies in labor management, is another striking conceptual thread that is woven throughout the study's findings. Participant farmers place varying levels of trust in their workers – both family and non-family employees. Degrees of trust can vary according to growers' own personalities,

their positive or negative experiences with different types of workers, and their efforts to build trusting relationships with workers.

Trust and distrust are manifested in various ways throughout the study's findings. Individual growers exhibit varying levels of trust in members of their local communities as potential employees, as well as varying degrees of patience with certain types of workers like teenagers. Trust or distrust in the abilities and reliability of local people influence growers' recruitment practices and strategies as they consider the recruitment and retention of local workers. Some growers go to great lengths to hire local adults and teenagers, while others express frustration with the unreliability or unwillingness of local people. Often, they ultimately locate workers elsewhere.

Growers' level of trust is also demonstrated in amount of attention they pay to workers' needs or wishes. Those that exhibit more trusting relationships with their workers tend to show their appreciation of employees' efforts through expressions of gratitude, formal or informal incentives, and allowing them greater responsibility or independence in their work. Some growers foster reciprocal relationships with neighbors that benefit them when they require short- or long-term workers. These expressions of trust in family workers, hired workers, and neighbors are evident in their labor practices, as well as their perceptions of the trustworthiness of these individuals.

Participant farmers whose negative experiences have perpetuated less trusting relationships with their workers tend to lean on their own capabilities, family members, or sources of wage labor they deem more suitable for their needs. In these cases, growers find immigrant or migrant workers to be more dependable and more hardworking than local candidates. They associate these employees' work ethics with their own, where

they feel these individuals value the opportunity for hard work, long hours, and commitment to farming. In contrast, local teenagers or adult community members who are not interested in farm work are perceived as being untrustworthy or lazy.

For these reasons, some growers turn to their own family to take on extra work tasks and work hours. Because of their accumulated knowledge and experience on the family farm, family members are usually endowed with more trust than hired non-family workers. They are also more likely to espouse personal values that are similar to those of participant farm operators including a strong work ethic, commitment to the family business, and interest in the success and longevity of the family farm. Family members' flexibility is also a major aspect of their reliability, as they can be called on when other options fall through. However, not all farmers in the study place this kind of trust in family members. Some growers even have difficulty completely trusting their spouses, children, or other family members with tasks they feel are particularly important or complicated. These growers might tend to be particularly sensitive to the risks associated with farming and labor management. Their comparatively low levels of trust are also linked to noticeably inflexible labor practices and an exceptional reverence of a strong work ethic.

Work ethic

The mere mention of work ethic sparks passionate response from participant farmers. Some lament the perceived decline of work ethic among young people or members of the local community. Some nurture the work ethic of particular employees who exhibit a strong interest in farming. Others praise the strong work ethic of immigrant workers. Those that have children train them through instruction and their

own example to appreciate the value of a strong work ethic. As the study's findings indicate, participant growers understand the importance of hard work in farming and base many of their perceptions and experiences of farm labor issues on their valuation of this particular ideal.

The ideals associated with a strong work ethic are deeply embedded in the ways growers make labor management decisions. They express their appreciation of work ethics through their own hard work, their expectations of family members, and their varying levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hired help. Farmers' perceptions of different work ethics have bearing on the ways they manage labor and evaluate their employees. Growers' understandings of work ethic are related to their capacity for flexibility and trust, as well as their responses to various risk factors.

In the process of recruiting and rewarding hired workers, growers are cognizant of the value of workers' interest in agricultural work, their capacity for learning new skills, and their ability to work hard. With these ideals in mind, farmers are drawn to different kinds of recruitment methods to attract particular types of workers, as well as various ways of rewarding good work. They tend to allow considerable flexibility and place significant trust in hired employees who demonstrate a strong work ethic. This treatment is similar to the kinds of responsibility and recognition they accord their own family members. Family workers tend to be highly trusted due to their shared appreciation of hard work and their likely commitment to the family farm. These aspects of reliability and loyalty also contribute to their high level of adaptability to labor needs on the farm. Farm women, in particular, take on multiple roles to accommodate on- and off-farm labor requirements.

In contrast to these positive perspectives of a strong work ethic, some growers express frustration with the relatively weak motivations for work they have encountered in certain worker groups including local teenagers and adults. Some of these growers tend to measure others' work ethics against their own exceptional capacity for hard work. For example, one grower finds most employees do not have the same work ethic as most farmers: "There's not much harder, more expansive work ethic than what farmers have. And just about everybody is a letdown" (Farm 10, husband). Some farmers have found the "answer" to their "problem" (Farm 15) in immigrant workers or migrant farm workers. These farmers equate these workers' physical endurance and willingness to work to their own. One grower expresses his high regard for their work ethic:

It sure gives you a different perspective on the whole immigration debate. And we haven't hired illegal aliens and I don't intend to. But you certainly have a lot of sympathy for the whole thing. I mean, my goodness, if someone's actually willing to come here and go through great hardship just so they can work on your vegetable farm, you know they deserve a medal and a kiss on the mouth. That's amazing. We ought to really, you know, allow that to happen, or that, you know people can come here and actually do the jobs that Americans don't want to do. Whether, you know, it's working in the slaughterhouse or doing any of the dirty jobs that we're too spoiled to do. You know, I have a lot of respect for farm workers. You know for us it's different. We own the place, and it's our future here, but they don't and if they're willing to, you know, work in the hot sun and keep a cheerful attitude about it, that's really amazing. (Farm 4)

Related to this strong respect for hard work, some growers' express resentment toward governmental and other regulatory agencies for creating what they perceive to be unnecessary burdens for farmers and immigrant workers. These obstacles include certain financial costs associated with hired labor and legal issues associated with undocumented immigrant workers. Some growers express the sentiment that because few people are

willing to perform farm work, these individuals should be allowed to do so without undue burden.

These pervasive themes of risk, flexibility, trust, and work ethic play an important role in the ways small-scale seasonal growers respond to labor management challenges. As described above, the concept of risk and its associated mechanisms of response, are related to participant farmers' management styles and attitudes toward challenging labor issues. These practices and perceptions, in turn, are influenced in various ways by structural limitations, farmers' own values, and their interactions with other individuals, groups, and organizations.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented findings and analyses regarding farmers' labor practices and the perspectives and experiences that inform their labor management decisions. I have considered the influence of key social factors, as well as issues of structure and agency, on growers' decisions and actions in labor relations. I described important background elements that are pertinent to the analysis including a summary of farm tasks and work routines, as well as aspects of risk associated with farm labor management. I described how farmers' divergent labor management styles and approaches to particular challenges are characterized in their labor practices. Using an actor-oriented theoretical perspective, I described and interpreted findings related to growers' orientations to four social actors that emerged from the data: family, hired workers, local community, and regulatory organizations. I then identified two important divergences that emerged from interview data regarding farmers' formal or informal management styles and their accepting or resistant approaches to labor challenges. I paid

special attention to the ways farmers' interactions with individual and organizational actors affect growers' decisions. Finally, I tied together notions from these findings by drawing relationships between prominent themes. The major linking analytical concepts are identified through a discussion of risk and response in farm labor management. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the importance of this analysis as it relates to previous literature, practical and theoretical application, and future research.

CHAPTER 5:

Discussion and Conclusion

1. Introduction of chapter

The purpose of this study is to investigate how small-scale and mid-sized seasonal farm operators understand and experience farm labor issues, and how these perspectives shape their decisions regarding labor management practices. I set out to address this purpose with two main research questions: 1) How are small and mid-sized seasonal farm operators managing their labor forces in order to accomplish work on their farms? and 2) How do their personal perceptions and experiences inform their decisions regarding farm labor management? This inquiry encompasses growers' labor management practices, as well as how their knowledge and prior experiences with farm labor issues influence their decisions.

In this concluding chapter, I present a discussion of major findings from the research and conclusions drawn from these findings. I then discuss research implications of the study and how the research contributes to scholarly work in the sociology of agriculture, as well as the more applied work of farmers, agricultural professionals, and policy-makers. Finally, I propose directions for future research on the topic of farm labor on small-scale farms.

2. Discussion

Through an analysis of interview data, supported by site visits, I have found that participant growers adopt both formal and informal labor management styles in order to satisfy their labor requirements and accommodate the needs of their workers. They make

daily and long-term decisions about their management styles based on their experiences and interactions with other individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations. These influential social actors include family members, hired workers, community members, and regulatory agencies.

This finding is supported in previous literature that suggests farmers require a high level of flexibility in their farm management practices, including labor management practices. Farmers adopt various combinations of formal and informal strategies in order to remain adaptable to uncertain market and labor conditions within their families, their local communities, and elsewhere. This flexibility, therefore, is essential to help defray some of the risks associated with employing family and non-family farm workers. Furthermore, participant growers demonstrate that they are cognizant of the human aspect of farm labor management. They adapt their formal and informal management styles by various degrees to accommodate their workers, while continually considering the economic viability of the farm and business.

This flexibility and awareness of others' circumstances reflects the power of farmers' own agency as they consider the limitations and opportunities in labor management. Whether their management styles are formal or informal, and whether their response to challenge is accepting or resistant, farmers are reflexive actors who consider their experiences and interactions with various internal and external actors when making decisions. Some growers feel more hindered by structural forces than others, but all draw on their own beliefs and values, as well as their personal experiences with labor issues, when developing their labor management strategies. These values are evidenced in their varying levels and forms of adaptability, trust, and work ethic.

In Chapter 4, I have delineated differences between growers' responses to farm labor challenges and change by characterizing more accepting and more resistant attitudes. Again, findings from this study indicate that individual farmers' perspectives are multifaceted, and they espouse both accepting and resistant modes of response to various labor-related problems. While some growers tend to be more committed than others to adapting their management practices to accommodate these challenges, each participant exhibits varying levels of acceptance depending on the particular issues at hand. Their attitudes about labor challenges are related to their previous experiences with farm workers, as well as their own values and beliefs regarding farming and farm work.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, previous literature bolsters the understanding that growers must show some level of acceptance and commitment in their management of workers in order to remain flexible and accommodate certain risk factors. The adaptability of farm women and family members; consideration of workers' employment needs; awareness of limitations and opportunities of local and non-local labor sources; and acceptance or frustration with governmental and non-governmental regulations all factor into growers' reactions to labor challenges. Again, growers demonstrate their different kinds and levels of agency in their responses to these various factors. They draw on their own principles regarding interactions with family and hired workers, as well as their values of independence and hard work, when making decisions about how to approach challenges and change on the farm.

The study's findings, when viewed through an actor-oriented theoretical lens, illuminate farmers' first-hand knowledge and lived experiences with labor issues. While they certainly are subject to structural forces beyond their control, including various

kinds of risk associated with agriculture, they also enact their own agency in response to other people and conditions. Participant farmers reveal that they do not make their decisions in a vacuum, but rather are continually aware of the needs and preferences of other individuals and entities in their surroundings. These growers are responsive actors who rely on these others, not only for human labor, but also for social and economic interaction on the farm and in the community.

These small and mid-sized farm operators' actions are likely to be at least partially influenced by the needs and opinions of their workers and community members. Their farms are embedded in a local context where their production, management, and marketing practices may be visible to the public. In order for their businesses to succeed, farmers must maintain a level of transparency with their communities regarding many aspects of their farm management, including labor practices. Closer public and regulatory scrutiny of practices may present certain challenges for small-scale farmers, but is also likely to promote better working conditions for farm workers including economically and socially vulnerable immigrant populations.

Understanding that farmers are interactive and reflexive actors within a more complex web of actors involved in agricultural labor arrangements is key to the advancement of scholarly research on this study's specific topic, as well as related issues regarding small-scale and mid-sized farms, seasonal farm management, and agricultural labor. Furthermore, findings from this study can be important for the development of policy and the enhancement of practical farm labor management options. Ultimately, the knowledge gained through this research is also important for broader social application in rural communities.

3. Contribution to the sociology of agriculture

As I noted in Chapters 1 and 2, there is a gap in the sociological literature regarding small farms and their current needs and challenges with farm labor. Although farm labor issues have been examined in the broader context of small farm survival, particularly in studies conducted during and following the farm crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, there is a need to revisit these issues and how they have changed since the turn of the century. This study, although small in scale and scope, helps to fill in this part of this story regarding US agricultural labor issues. Furthermore, findings from this research can help guide future studies that explore farm labor issues on small-scale and mid-sized farms, as well as farm operations where production is highly seasonal.

This research, as a study that focuses specifically on growers' experiences and perceptions, increases scholarly knowledge of the kinds of labor practices farmers employ on their farms, as well as key social actors that influence their decisions. This analysis contributes to ongoing academic discussions about the social and economic sustainability of small-scale farming and family farms. It elaborates on issues regarding small farm persistence by addressing how farmers balance their management of family and non-family wage workers to achieve farm success. More specifically, it considers how growers, as actors involved in a larger capitalist society, respond to various actors and circumstances to accomplish necessary work and persist as semi-capitalist, semi-independent producers. Their coping mechanisms are evidenced in specific examples of farm labor strategies and an analysis of the personal motives behind these strategies. The specificity of this study and its findings contribute to larger bodies of literature on small farm persistence and farm labor issues.

Beyond its contributions to the literature on farm labor, this research adds a more focused element to farm labor research by studying farms of a certain size and a certain commodity group. Therefore, findings from this research extend the sociology of agriculture to other fields including agricultural economics studies; research on small-scale and mid-sized farms; regional food systems studies; and research regarding fruit, vegetable, and horticultural farm management. The perceptions and experiences of participant farmers in this study offer valuable insights to sociologists, as well as researchers in these other disciplines who are concerned with social science aspects of farm labor management. In this way, the study expands the sociological literature about agricultural labor issues and complements multidisciplinary literatures about this topic.

4. Contribution to practice and policy

This study has research implications beyond its contributions to academic research. Findings from this research can provide practical knowledge to agricultural professionals such as agricultural extension specialists; individuals and groups who work toward farm preservation and rural community development; and small-scale and mid-sized farm operators themselves. This study also offers applicable information and insight that can be instrumental in the development of policy related to farm labor.

Findings from the study and examples of labor practices can be immediately useful for farmers who are curious about other growers' concerns and the strategies they employ to overcome them. The research also affords farmers the opportunity to relate their own experiences and perceptions to the stories of other farm operators. Having shared experiences and viewpoints can be instrumental for growers in order to feel capable of adding to or adapting their labor management practices. Concepts from the

study may help them to consider management options they had not previously tried. For example, growers can more closely examine their current methods of labor management and consider how research findings about formal and informal styles and accepting and resistant responses can improve or build upon their own labor practices. Growers may carefully examine the roles other social actors play in their labor decisions and, in turn, develop more effective ways of communicating with these actors in their own lives. Farmers may think about how to focus their personal values regarding flexibility, trust, and work ethic toward more efficient and successful labor management strategies.

The study can also inform professionals who work with farmers to better understand the specific labor-related challenges they might be facing. The research can educate these individuals of shared problems and solutions in growers' dealings with farm workers so that they, in turn, can develop management recommendations and training programs that reflect those perspectives. While there is clearly no silver bullet for growers' concerns about farm labor issues, the study provides useful ideas for combining different management styles and diversifying management strategies and labor sources. Agricultural educators can develop programs that address formal and informal management practices, as well as accepting and resistant approaches to particular challenges. By working one on one with growers and by considering farmers' particular farm and labor situations, extension educators can use findings from this research to more objectively and effectively provide guidance regarding farm labor practices. Farmers themselves, as well as individuals and organizations that advise them, would benefit from the information and insight offered by the study's participants.

The study's implications for policy are more difficult to identify because of the complex nature of policy-making and the multiple types of policy that could affect farm labor management. Farm labor policy, including ongoing debates about immigration reform, is one venue where farmers' voices should be heard. For example, this study's findings indicate that participant growers, whether they employ immigrant workers or not, have strong feelings about these workers' eligibility to work in US agriculture. This study and others (Dudley and Alexander 2009a, Shreck et al. 2006) suggest that many farmers and US residents feel that undocumented immigrant workers are vital to the nation's agricultural production and should be granted some form of legal working status. This study can help shape immigration reform policy that considers not only the seasonal needs of small-scale farmers, but also their concerns about the availability, willingness, and quality of local help.

Other related policy-making outlets include general labor organizations, rural and community development services, farmland preservation programs, agricultural education programs, and interest groups involved in supporting local food and small-scale agriculture. These groups and others that are tangentially related to the economic and social well-being of farm families and farm workers stand to increase their knowledge of small-scale and seasonal farm operators' perspectives on farm labor issues. Local, statewide, or national programs can be implemented to help link small-scale farmers and local communities. For example, findings from this study can contribute to educational and outreach initiatives like the USDA's Agriculture in the Classroom where young people's exposure to agricultural issues may increase their interest in farm work and future careers in agriculture. Local and nationwide initiatives that increase the

public's awareness of farmers' labor concerns can result in policy that makes agricultural work more appealing and rewarding for workers in farmers' own communities. For example, unemployment offices can provide important connections between unemployed workers and farmers, where efforts are also made to provide continuous employment for these workers in agriculture or other occupations. Results of policy-making that effectively and thoughtfully incorporates the concerns of farmers, as well as other actors in the labor management arena, can ultimately benefit growers, their families, their workers, and their communities.

5. Significance for society

The long-term and indirect implications of this study and related research are related to small farm sustainability, rural community development, and the preservation of local agriculture and farmland. Understanding farmers' perspectives as one major component of farm labor challenges and solutions provides an important foundation on which to build labor and community policies like those recommended above. Positive results of farm labor management plans that place equal importance on the needs of farm operators, farm families, farm workers, and the communities in which they live can benefit local economies, communities, and landscapes.

Although agricultural work typically does not garner much regard from the general public, there does seem to be a recent shift, at least in alternative and local food movements, where there is a growing appreciation for small-scale and local farming. This trend can benefit from the knowledge and experiences of farmers, like the perspectives expressed in this study. Many participant growers lament society's lack of appreciation for farm work and manual labor. If this kind of difficult but necessary work

gained more respect in farmers' communities, broader attitudes about farm work might change. Farmers' and farm workers' toils can receive better financial compensation if their professions were more adequately valued in American society.

In effect, there can be a resurgence of successful small and mid-sized farms that employ members of their local communities and other workers who might stimulate local economies. Small-scale farmers might be able to afford better wages, more desirable benefits, and more certain hours of employment. In a local farm labor system that operates with the best interests of both farm family and farm worker in mind, ties between growers and their communities can be strengthened. Community support through labor and consumption can lead to farm success, keeping more small farms on the land and in production. This, in turn, would benefit communities by providing local jobs, supporting farming livelihoods, and preserving agricultural landscapes.

6. Weaknesses of the study

Potential weaknesses of this study are related to its exploratory nature, its small scale, and its narrow scope. Because little sociological research has been previously conducted on the specific topic of small-scale, seasonal farm operators' concerns about labor management options, I developed a study that only begins to explore the sociological issues pertaining to this topic. The study could have been larger in its scale or more diverse in its methods to present a stronger, more comprehensive understanding of farm labor concerns for small and mid-sized farm operators.

Because the study's sample size includes only 15 farms and 20 respondents, there are likely important labor management perspectives that were not expressed in the data. A larger sample would have provided richer data and more growers' perspectives. A

larger sample also could have represented a broader diversity of farmer types including minority farmers and more women farmers.

The scope of the study is intentionally narrow, and therefore excludes potentially important aspects of farm labor research. For example, the geographical range of the study is small and does not include different regions within Pennsylvania or other regions of the country. Furthermore, the study's narrow focus on fruit and vegetable producers does not necessarily also represent the labor experiences and concerns of farmers involved in dairy, meat, or grain production. Finally, this research focuses narrowly on growers' perspectives, but does not explore the experiences and perceptions of other actors involved in farm labor management decisions including farm family members, hired workers, local community members and groups, regulatory organizations, and policy-makers.

7. Recommendations for further research

The scope of this study is narrow both in terms of its number of participants and its focus on farm operators, who represent only one group of actors in farm labor arrangements. There is much room for further research on similar issues regarding small farms and labor management concerns. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses would be useful for providing a better understanding of agricultural labor issues that affect small and mid-sized farms, farm operators, farm workers, and rural communities.

There is little previous sociological literature that specifically investigates farm labor requirements and practices on smaller-scale farms. Nationwide, there is a need for survey-based quantitative studies that assess labor situations on small and mid-sized farms. Such research should distinguish smaller farms from large-scale farms with much

larger labor needs. To accommodate the wide variety of farm types and regional differences that exist in US agriculture, it would be appropriate to develop surveys that address these differences. Previous literature has demonstrated that there are significant differences in labor requirements, for example, on vegetable farms and grain farms (Kanel 2008). Likewise, seasonal needs for workers and availability of certain kinds of workers may vary from place to place. Therefore, data collection methods should incorporate questions regarding different commodities, as well as local labor and market conditions.

Further qualitative analysis can play an important complimentary role to any survey-based farm labor research. It would be valuable to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of a greater number of farm operators in a greater diversity of farming situations. For example, it would be useful for researchers to examine farm labor management concerns for farmers in different regions of the country. With the percentage of women farmers and minority farmers on the rise in the United States (USDA 2007b), research exploring different labor management approaches among male and female farm operators and farmers of different ethnic backgrounds would also add to our understanding of national farm labor issues. In-depth interviews and participant observation can provide critical tools for understanding the challenges and circumstances that shape farmers' labor management decisions. Document analysis, interviews, and longitudinal data analysis can also target chronic issues in farm labor management by delving deeper into farmers' experiences with farm labor throughout history and over time. Resulting data would broaden perspectives for scholars, policy-makers, farmers, and communities seeking sustainable options for agricultural and rural employment.

While farmers' perspectives are integral to farm labor research, it is also tremendously important to address perceptions, experiences and practices of other individuals and groups involved in farm labor issues. Future studies should include quantitative and qualitative analyses of these issues as they affect and are affected by family workers and hired workers on small and mid-sized farms. Such research should also look beyond those directly involved in farm work to consider how consumers and local communities are associated with farm labor challenges and potential solutions. Studies in this arena should further consider the influence of local, state and federal governmental and non-governmental organizations on farm labor options, restrictions, and opportunities. Again, survey-based studies, as well as qualitative analyses rooted in interviews, observation, and document analysis, would be useful in addressing pertinent questions about sustainable labor management options.

This kind of research will certainly not occur without major methodological challenges. Data on farm workers, for example, is notoriously unreliable because many undocumented and immigrant workers are unlikely to be represented in farm censuses or other farm studies (Kanel 2008; Larson et al. 2002). The social and economic vulnerability of these individuals and their families decreases their level of participation in research, as well as their likelihood to be open and truthful about their experiences. Because undocumented workers make up a significant proportion of US farm workers (Kanel 2008; Levine 2007), it would be irresponsible to dismiss their underrepresentation in the data. Perhaps studies on small and mid-sized farms, where workers might feel more autonomous than workers on large industrialized farms (Newby 1979), would elicit

more accurate information about experiences and perceptions of immigrant and migrant farm workers.

8. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have set out to share the stories of small-scale seasonal farm operators and their perspectives on farm labor issues. I have approached my research objectives with systematic methods of data collection and analysis so that I could accurately and fairly represent the experiences and meanings growers ascribe to their perspectives. Furthermore, I have used my personal experience and knowledge of farm labor issues to fuel my research motivations and guide the research process. As a result, I believe this thesis adequately embodies the diversity of participant farmers' experiences with farm labor and provides a well-rounded analysis of their perspectives.

In many regards, I share the labor management concerns of participant growers. I understand the feelings of frustration and stress that some farmers experience when they are overworked and understaffed. I also understand the sense of gratitude they express when they have sufficient good help on the farm. In speaking with participant farmers, I have also come to better understand their feelings of conflict when they are faced with difficult decisions regarding employment compensations, issues of economic and social equity, and controversies associated with the hiring of immigrant workers.

I believe that this research and similar studies can ultimately help farmers discover and develop labor management options that relieve stress and reduce risk. Outside of labor concerns, farmers already deal with significant sources of stress and risk related to biological, geographical, and market conditions. Furthermore, their occupation requires considerable skill and organization, as well as long hours and difficult working

conditions. I believe we are fortunate small-scale and mid-sized farmers are able to overcome these various challenges by drawing on their own strong personal values and motivations to remain in farming. Some challenges, like market constraints linked to capitalism and global trade, are too large and too global to expect imminent change. Improvements in the availability, quality, and compensation of farm workers, however, might represent more tangible goals for farmers and their communities.

What participant farmers perceive to be negative trends toward the devaluation of farming and the depreciation of manual labor in American society is not irreversible. We are already observing recent shifts in public awareness regarding agriculture (Lyson 2004). The rise of Community Supported Agriculture and the local food movement provides evidence of a growing public appreciation of small-scale and local farmers. Furthermore, gradual change can be implemented over time so that younger generations might again demonstrate interest in farming and farm work. An approach similar to environmental education programs and recycling efforts in American schools can also be applied in communities with the purpose of supporting small-scale agriculture, preserving local operating farms, and encouraging new and beginning farmers to develop their own farm operations.

I conclude this thesis by expressing the hope that small and mid-sized farm operators find increased opportunity and support in their efforts to manage viable farm businesses. I hope that their farm labor concerns may be at least partially allayed by increased community interest in agriculture and informed policy decisions that benefit both farmers and farm workers. The ultimate objective for small-scale farm labor management should include allowing farmers sufficient access to qualified employees,

while holding them to fair employment standards for their workers. With these basic goals, and strong personal ethics and ideals to bolster them, small-scale farmers may stand a better chance at staying in business and on the land.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, Paul. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Barlett, Peggy. 1986. "Profile of Full-time Farm Workers in a Georgia County." *Rural Sociology* 51:78-96.
- Barlett, Peggy. 1993. *American Dreams, Rural Realities*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Bazeley, Pat. 2007. "Analysing Qualitative Data: More than 'Identifying Themes.'" Paper presented at the 2007 Qualitative Research Convention of the Qualitative Research Association of Malaysia. Selangor, Malaysia.
- Bogdan, Robert and Sari Knopp Biklen. 2007. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, 5th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Bonanno, Allassandro. 1987. *Small Farms: Persistence with Legitimation*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bonanno, Allassandro and Douglas Constance. 2008. "Agency and Resistance in the Sociology of Agriculture and Food. Pp. 29-44 in *The Fight Over Food*, edited by W. Wright and G. Middendorf. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Bloomberg, Linda Dale and Marie Volpe. 2008. *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Browne, William. 1992. *Sacred Cows and Hot Potatoes: Agrarian Myths in Agricultural Policy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Buttel, Frederick, Olaf Larson, and Gilbert Gillespie. 1990. *The Sociology of Agriculture*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc.
- Buttel, Frederick H. 2001. "Some Reflections on Late Twentieth Century Agrarian Political Economy." *Sociologia Ruralis* 41:165-181.

- Cuykendall, Charles, Eddy LaDue, and R. David Smith. 2002. *What Successful Small Farmers Say: The Results of a Survey of Successful Small Farm Operators*. Research Bulletin 2002-01. Department of Agricultural Resources and Managerial Economics, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Retrieved October 25, 2010 (http://www.aem.cornell.edu/research/researchpdf/rb/2002/Cornell_Dyson_rb0201.pdf).
- Creswell, John. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Danes, Sharon, and Donald McTavish. 1997. "Role Involvement of Farm Women." *Journal of Family and Economic Issue* 18:69-89.
- Denton, Beckie Mullin. 2002. "Community Response to the Introduction of Hispanic Migrant Agricultural Workers into Central Kentucky." Pp. 115-124 in *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour: Constraints and Community Responses*, edited by J.L. Findeis, A.M. Vandeman, J.M. Larson and J.L. Runyan. Wallingford, UK and New York, NY: CABI Publishing.
- Denzin, Norman. 1989. *Interpretive Interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dudley, Kathryn Marie. 2003. "The Entrepreneurial Self: Identity and Morality in a Midwestern Farming Community." Pp. 175-191 in *Fighting for the Farm*, edited by Jane Adams. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dudley, Mary Jo and Sarah Alexander. 2009a. "New Yorkers Support Legalization of Undocumented Farmworkers." Cornell Farmworker Program, Cornell University. Retrieved on October 25, 2010 (http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cfp/upload/LegalizationFlier_5-19-09-2.pdf).
- Dudley, Mary Jo and Sarah Alexander. 2009b. "NYS Residents Report Positive Impact of Undocumented Farmworkers." Cornell Farmworker Program, Cornell University. Retrieved on October 25, 2010 (http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cfp/upload/FarmworkerImpacts_5-18-09FINAL.pdf).
- Errington, Andrew and Ruth Gasson. 1994. "Labour Use in the Farm Family Business." *Sociologia Ruralis* 34:293-307.
- Findeis, Jill. 2002. "Hired Farm Labour Adjustments and Constraints." Pp. 3-14 in *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour: Constraints and Community Responses*, edited by J.L. Findeis, A.M. Vandeman, J.M. Larson and J.L. Runyan. Wallingford, UK and New York, NY: CABI Publishing.

- Friedmann, Harriet. 1978. "World Market, State, and Family Farm: Social Bases of Household Production in the Era of Wage Labor." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20:545-586.
- Fulton, Ralph Thomas. 1983. "Workers in the Fields: Historical Perspectives on U.S. Farm Structure and Agricultural Labor." Pp. 125-133 in *Farms in Transition: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Farm Structure*, edited by D.E. Brewster, W.D. Rasmussen, and G. Youngberg. Ames, IA: The Iowa State University Press.
- Gabbard, Susan, Alicia Fernandez-Mott and Daniel Carroll. 2002. "Examining Farm Worker Images." Pp. 15-24 in *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour: Constraints and Community Responses*, edited by J.L. Findeis, A.M. Vandeman, J.M. Larson and J.L. Runyan. Wallingford, UK and New York, NY: CABI Publishing.
- Getz, Christy, Sandy Brown and Aimee Shreck. 2008. "Class Politics and Agricultural Exceptionalism in California's Organic Agriculture Movement." *Politics and Society* 36:478-507.
- Goldschmidt, Walter. 1978. *As You Sow*. Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun and Co. Publishers.
- Godwin, Deborah and Julia Marlowe. 1990. "Farm Wives' Labor Force Participation and Earnings." *Rural Sociology* 55:25-43.
- Hall, Alan and Veronika Mogyorody. 2007. "Organic Farming, Gender and the Labor Process." *Rural Sociology* 72:289-316.
- Harper, Douglas. 2000. "Requiem for the Small Dairy: Agricultural Change in Northern New York." *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 8:13-45.
- Harper, Douglas. 2001. *Changing Works: Visions of a Lost Agriculture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Harper, Douglas and Thomas Lyson. 1995. "Labor Exchange Among Dairy Farmers: Lessons from the Past for a More Sustainable Future." *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 6:193-213. Edited by Harry K. Schwarzweller and Thomas A. Lyson. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc.
- Heffernan, William and Paul Lasely. 1978. "Agricultural Structure and Interaction in the Local Community: A Case Study." *Rural Sociology* 43:348-61.
- Hoppe, Robert, James MacDonald, and Penni Korb. 2010. *Small Farms in the United States: Persistence Under Pressure*. USDA, Economic Research Service. Economic Bulletin 63.

- Jackson-Smith, Douglas and Gilbert Gillespie. 2005. "Impacts of Farm Structural Change on Farmers' Social Ties." *Society and Natural Resources* 18:215-40.
- Jary, David and Julia Jary. 1991. *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Jussaume, Raymond and Kazumi Kondoh. 2008. "Possibilities for Revitalizing Local Agriculture: Evidence from Four Counties in Washington State." Pp. 225-246 in *The Fight Over Food*, edited by W. Wright and G. Middendorf. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kanel, William. 2008. "Hired Farmworkers a Major Input for Some U.S. Farm Sectors." *Amber Waves* 6:10-15. USDA. ERS.
- Key, Nigel and Michael Roberts. 2007. "Measure of Trends in Farm Size Tell Different Stories." *Amber Waves* 5:36-37.
- Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Larson, Janelle, Jill Findeis, Hema Swaminathan, and Qiuyan Wang. 2002. "A Comparison of Data Sources for Hired Farm Labour Research: the NAWS and the CPS." Pp. 243-258 in *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour: Constraints and Community Responses*, edited by J.L. Findeis, A.M. Vandeman, J.M. Larson and J.L. Runyan. Wallingford, UK and New York, NY: CABI Publishing.
- Levine, Linda. 2007. "Farm Labor Shortages and Immigration Policy." Congressional Research Service Report for Congress.
- Lobao, Linda and Katherine Meyer. 2001. "The Great Agricultural Transition: Crisis, Change and Social Consequences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:103-24.
- Long, Norman. 2001. *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Long, Norman. 2008. "Resistance, Agency, and Counterwork: A Theoretical Positioning." Pp. 70-89 in *The Fight Over Food*, edited by Wynne Wright and Gerard Middendorf. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lyson, Thomas. 2004. *Civic Agriculture*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press.
- Mann, Susan and James Dickinson. 1978. "Obstacles to the Development of a Capitalist Agriculture." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 5:466-481.

- Matlay, Harry. 1999. "Employee Relations in Small Firms: A Micro-business Perspective." *Employment Relations* 21:285.
- Maxwell, Joseph. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interpretive Approach*, 2nd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 42. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meares, Alison. 1997. "Making the Transition from Conventional to Sustainable Agriculture: Gender, Social Movement Participation, and Quality of Life on the Family Farm." *Rural Sociology* 62:21-47.
- Merriam, Sharon and Associates. 2002. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mize, Ronald. 2006. "Mexican Contract Workers and the U.S. Capitalist Agricultural Labor Process: The Formative Era, 1942-1964." *Rural Sociology* 71:85-108.
- Mishra, Ashok, Hisham El-Osta, Mitchell Morehart, James Johnson and Jeffery Hopkins. 2002. *Income, Wealth and the Economic Well-being of Farm Households*. Washington, DC: USDA-ERS.
- Mooney, Patrick. 1988. *My Own Boss? Class, Rationality, and the Family Farm*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Moore, Keith. 1989. "Agrarian and Non-Agrarian Identities of Farm Spouses." *Rural Sociology* 52:74-82.
- Mugera, Amin and Vera Bitsch. 2005. "Managing Labor on Dairy Farms: A Resource-Based Perspective with Evidence from Case Studies." *International Food and Agribusiness Review* 8:79-98.
- Newby, Howard. 1979. *The Deferential Worker: A Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Patton, Michael. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). 2007. *A Consumer's Guide to Pennsylvania Farm Markets*. Retrieved October 25, 2010 (http://www.pfb.com/news/ag-issues/Marketing/Consumers_Guide_PAMarkets-sm.pdf).
- Pfeffer, Max. 1983. "Social Origins of Three Systems of Farm Production in the United States." *Rural Sociology* 48:540-562.

- Raper, Arthur and F. Howard Forsyth. 1943. "Cultural Factors Which Result In Artificial Farm Labor Shortages." *Rural Sociology* 8:3-14.
- Reed, Deborah, Susan Westneat, Steven Browing, and Lana Skarke. 1999. "The Hidden Work of the Farm Homemaker." *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health* 5:317-327.
- Reimer, Bill. 1986. "Women as Farm Labor." *Rural Sociology* 51:143-155.
- Rodriguez, Nestor. 2004. "'Workers Wanted': Employer Recruitment of Immigrant Labor." *Work and Occupations* 31:453-473.
- Rosenfeld, Rachel. 1986. "U.S. Farm Women: Their Part in Farm Work and Decision Making." *Work and Occupations* 13:179-201.
- Roth, Cathy. 2009. "Vegetable Program: Community Supported Agriculture." UMass Extension. University of Massachusetts. Amherst, MA. Retrieved October 25, 2010 (http://www.umassvegetable.org/food_farming_systems/csa/).
- Sachs, Carolyn. 1983. *The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production*. Totowa, NJ: Roman and Allanheld.
- Sachs, Carolyn. 1988. "The Participation of Women and girls in the Market and Non-market Activities on Pennsylvania Farms." Pp. 123-134 in *Women and Farming: Changing Roles, Changing Structures*, edited by W.G. Haney and J.B. Knowles. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Sachs, Carolyn. 1996. *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture and Environment*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shreck, Aimee, Christy Getz and Gail Feenstra. 2006. "Social Sustainability, Farm Labor, and Organic Agriculture: Findings from an Exploratory Analysis." *Agriculture and Human Values* 23:439-449.
- Schwartz, Dona. 1992. *Waucoma Twilight: Generations of the Farm*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Simpson, Ida Harper, John Wilson and Kristina Young. 1988. "The Sexual Division of Labor: A Replication and Extension." *Rural Sociology* 53:145-165.
- Tegegne, Fisseha, Surendra Singh, Enefiok Ekenem and Safdar Muhammed. 2001. "Labor Use by Small-Scale Conventional and Sustainable Farmers in Tennessee." *Southern Rural Sociology* 7:66-80.

- U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2007a. *2007 Census of Agriculture*. Pennsylvania: State and County Data. 1(38).
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2007b. *2007 Census of Agriculture*. United States: Summary and State Data. 1(51). Retrieved October 25, 2010 (<http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>).
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (ERS). 2005. *Farm Structure: Glossary*. Retrieved October 25, 2010 (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/farmstructure/glossary.htm#smlfarm>).
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 2010. *America's Diverse Family Farms: 2010 Edition*. Economic Information Bulletin 67. Retrieved October 25, 2010 (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB67/EIB67.pdf>).
- Vaupel, Suzanne 1997. "A Better Life for Farm Workers." Pp. 119-137 in *Visions of American Agriculture*, edited by W. Lockeretz. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.
- Wenger, Morton and Pem Davidson Buck. 1988. "Farms Families and Super-exploitation: An Integrative Reappraisal." *Rural Sociology* 53:460-472.
- Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interviewing*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Wilkinson, Adrian. 1999. "Employment Relations in SMEs." *Employee Relations* 21:206.
- Wright, Wynne and Gerad Middendorf. 2008. *The Fight Over Food*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Wrong, Dennis. 1970. *Max Weber*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

APPENDIX A:

Contact Letter

Dear [Participant]:

I am a graduate student at Penn State, working on a Master's Degree in Rural Sociology. I would like to inform you of a research project that I will be conducting during the winter of 2009. I hope you will be interested in participating in this project.

Through this study, I hope to better understand how small and mid-sized seasonal farm operations cope with current challenges in farm labor management. I am interested in learning more about how Pennsylvania farmers maintain an adequate work force throughout the production season and how previous experiences have informed their labor management strategies.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a single interview that should last about one hour. You will also be asked to fill out a short questionnaire about your farm and your farm's labor situation. This questionnaire should take only about 15 minutes to complete.

If you are interested in participating in this project, I can discuss it with you further over the telephone. I will call you during the first week of February to talk to you more about the study. We can also schedule an interview at that time.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Audrey Schwartzberg

M.S. Student, Rural Sociology
Penn State

APPENDIX B:

Telephone Contact Script

Hello, my name is Audrey Schwartzberg. I'm a graduate student at Penn State. I sent you a letter last week about a study I will be conducting this winter that looks at how local farmers are dealing with farm labor management challenges.

Did you get a chance to read that letter?

With each farmer in the study, I will conduct a one-hour interview and hand out a short questionnaire. I am doing this research because I want to better understand the kind of labor issues farmers in this area are facing and the kinds of labor management strategies farmers are adopting to deal with these issues. I think your ideas and experiences would be very valuable to improve my understanding of these issues.

Would you be willing to participate in the study?

Do you have any questions about the interview or any other part of the study?

Now, we can schedule a date and time for an interview.

APPENDIX C:

Background Questionnaire

1. How many years have you been farming?
2. Total farm acres (owned and rented): _____
3. Of these total acres, how many are in vegetable and small fruit production?:

4. Is your farm Certified Organic? _____
5. Other than yourself, how many different people worked on your farm in the 2008 calendar year? _____

Of these, how many were:

- a. Full-time hired labor/year round _____
 - b. Full-time hired labor/seasonal _____
 - c. Part-time hired labor/year round _____
 - d. Part-time hired labor/seasonal _____
 - e. Family members (not formally hired) _____
 - f. Others (not formally hired) _____
6. Approximately how many of your paid employees worked less than five months on the farm in 2008?
 7. Approximately what percentage of your farm's total sales comes from the following products?
 - _____ Vegetables
 - _____ Small fruits and berries
 - _____ Orchard fruit
 - _____ Livestock or dairy
 - _____ Poultry or eggs
 - _____ Value-added products (baked goods, nursery products, wool, honey, etc.)

_____ Other: _____
100 % TOTAL

8. Which category most closely captures your gross annual farm sales for 2008:

- Less than \$1000
- \$1000-\$9,999
- \$10,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$249,999
- \$250,000 - \$499,999
- \$500,000 or more

9. Approximately what percentage of your total household income in 2008 came from the farm? _____

10. In 2008, did you have any paid non-farm jobs (e.g., truck driver, teacher, salesperson, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

11. If YES, what kind of non-farm jobs or work did you do in 2008?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

12. In 2008, did your spouse have any paid non-farm jobs?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX D:

Interview Guide

1. To start, please describe a typical work day during the busy season on your farm. (Probe/Follow-up: Ask respondent to go through typical sequence of activities from start to end of working day.)
2. How do the different jobs that need to be done on the farm change throughout the seasons?
3. How would you describe these different farm jobs? (Probe for what respondent sees as more positive aspects and more negative aspects of these farm jobs.)
4. Now I'd like to learn more about the different people who work on your farm. (Probe: Are these workers family members or hired workers? Do they work full-time or part-time, year-round or seasonally? Follow-up: Have you experienced any particular challenges or advantages with this employment set-up? Please describe these.)
5. How do these different workers' tasks differ? Please describe which workers generally perform different tasks on the farm. (Follow-up: Why are different employees assigned different tasks? Probe: Does it depend on skill level, years of experience, whether or not they are family or hired workers?)
6. Please describe some of the situations on a typical day where you interact with workers on your farm? (Probe: For example, do you speak to them every day? Do you work along with them or do they do some work on their own? Do you eat with them?)
7. How do you communicate job tasks and responsibilities to workers? (Probe: specific strategies or actions? Probe to learn if respondent finds it easy or difficult to communicate his/her expectations.)
8. How have you generally found or attracted people to work on the farm? (Probe: specific strategies or actions?)
9. What do you do to keep good workers? (Probe: specific strategies, actions? Are they regular or one-time?)
10. How would you describe the task of finding and keeping enough help to get work done on farm throughout the year?
11. Describe any specific experiences you've had with workers that you think would be important to help me understand the challenges and successes you've had

dealing with farm labor. (Follow-up: How are your experiences similar or different than those of other vegetable farmers in this area?)

12. Is there anything in particular you would like to change about the way you manage farm tasks or workers on your farm? (Follow-up/extension: What barriers or challenges do you face in making those changes? What resources would help you make those changes?)
13. Compared to all the other issues and challenges for your farm now, how concerned are you about recruiting and retaining labor?
14. Finally, is there anything else I haven't asked that you would add to help me understand how you manage farm workers or how you get work done on your farm?

THANK YOU!!

APPENDIX E:

Implied Consent Form

Implied Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Experiences and Perceptions of Pennsylvania Farmers in Regards to Farm Labor Management

Principal Investigator: Audrey Schwartzberg
Mailing address
[Telephone number]
[Email address]

Advisor: Clare Hinrichs
Mailing address
[Telephone number]
[Email address]

- 1. Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this research is to explore how small and mid-sized farm operators manage their labor resources on their farms in light of current challenges associated with farm labor management.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer a short questionnaire and participate in an hour-long interview. The interview will be recorded and then transcribed. Statements made during the interview may be quoted in written reports of the research, but your identity will not be associated with any quotes. Photographs may also be taken to help portray the work environment on your farm. Only if permission is granted, these photographs may be used in oral presentations of the research.
- 3. Benefits:** This research may provide researchers, community members and other farmers with a better understanding of the challenges seasonal farm operators face in securing an adequate workforce on their farms and strategies they have developed to address those challenges. This information might be useful for other farmers or agricultural extension educators who wish to improve labor management on smaller scale, seasonal farm operations.
- 4. Duration:** It will take about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and about one hour to complete the interview.

- 5. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Any digital recordings or photographs will be stored and secured on the primary investigator's personal computer in a password-protected file. Hard copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

Only the principal investigator will have direct access to interview recordings. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

Interviews will be transcribed from a digital recording to a typed document by the primary researcher. She will use these transcripts to analyze information from the interview.

Recordings, photographs and transcripts will be destroyed three years after the end of the research study, by September 2012.

- 6. Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Audrey Schwartzberg at [telephone number] with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.
- 7. Voluntary participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

Completion and return of the survey is considered your implied consent to participate in this study. Please keep this form for your records.