

**“A BREATH OF FRESH AIR...LITERALLY AND
FIGURATIVELY”: VOLUNTEERING AT THREE
NON-PROFIT FARMS IN MARYLAND**

by
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ABSTRACT

The literature about agricultural volunteering is growing, but there is a need for more qualitative research on the subject. Volunteering's implications for volunteers, farms, and communities are especially important to understand. This dissertation involved a case study of volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm); a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm); and a volunteer-run, faith-based farm (Faith Farm). I conducted over 190 hours of participant observation, as well as semi-structured interviews with 16 volunteers and three farm leaders.

The first paper (i.e., Chapter 4) explores the theoretical foundations and critiques of civic agriculture vis-à-vis building community and food security. I conclude that—with regard to volunteering—the sense of community was neither completely lacking nor fully present at the three farms. The meaningful interactions and sense of a common purpose strengthened feelings of community. However, these feelings were dampened by the high volunteer and staff turnover, the distant origins of some volunteers, and the solitary nature of certain tasks. Moreover, the three farms employed creative strategies for providing free and affordable food, but food provision was not the farms' only goal.

In the second paper, I describe the scope of tasks that volunteers performed and explore the ways that volunteers can contribute to or detract from farms' missions. Volunteers' contributions included forming a critical mass for labor and being competent and dedicated. However, staff members also needed to schedule and supervise volunteers, which entailed expending time and effort. Furthermore, volunteers could make mistakes or work slowly.

The final paper examines the antecedents and consequences for the farms' volunteers. Interpersonal connections, exercise, and professional development were among volunteers' reasons for volunteering, whereas severe weather, competing commitments, and the strenuousness of farming were three potential deterrents. The desirable consequences included stress relief, social connections, satisfaction, learning, and rewards and affirmation. Still, I experienced, observed, and heard about minor, undesirable health effects and issues with supervision. The role of race and community engagement is also addressed in this chapter.

I conclude the dissertation by discussing practical and theoretical implications, directions for future research, and strengths and limitations.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Thomas Lyson (2004) developed the concept of civic agriculture in response to the perceived deleteriousness of industrial agriculture. He defined the concept as “a locally-based agricultural and food production system that is tightly linked to a community’s social and economic development” (Lyson, 2000, p. 42).¹ Civic agriculture fosters mutually supportive relationships among farmers, consumers, and surrounding communities. Direct marketing strategies such as farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and food stands are often employed. Farms practicing civic agriculture may also attract visitors by hosting field trips, workshops, community events (e.g., festivals), and volunteers (Sumner, Mair, & Nelson, 2010).² I focus on volunteering in this dissertation.

The literature about volunteering at farms is nascent but growing. A number of studies have concentrated largely or entirely on other forms of non-wage agricultural work—including internships, apprenticeships, service learning activities, and Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015; Grossman et al., 2012; Levkoe, 2018; MacAuley & Niewolny, 2016; Miller & Mair, 2015; Mostafanezhad, Suryanata, Azizi, & Milne, 2016; Weiler, Otero, & Wittman, 2016). WWOOF is a network of organizations that facilitates an exchange between farms and individuals (WWOOF, 2018). The individuals, known as “WWOOFers,” provide labor to

¹ Given its natural connections to volunteering, I focus on the concept of civic agriculture in this dissertation. Nevertheless, terms like “food justice” and “food sovereignty” are also noteworthy. The former term refers to the pursuit of racial and economic equity vis-à-vis food issues, while the latter term emphasizes the importance of people controlling the production and distribution of their food (Mares & Alkon, 2011).

² To emphasize Lyson’s place-based conception of civic agriculture, I also refer to some farms as “civic agriculture sites.”

farms, and, in return, they receive room and board in a desirable location (e.g., another country). Although WWOOFing is sometimes described as “volunteer tourism,” it does not necessarily constitute volunteering; the exchange is ostensibly mutual, whereas common definitions of volunteering stress volunteers’ sacrifices (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Yamamoto & Engelsted, 2014). Nevertheless, WWOOF entails non-wage labor, and studies on the subject may be pertinent to agricultural volunteering.

The findings from research about WWOOF can be divided into two categories: (1) the WWOOFer perspective, that is, why they engage in WWOOFing and what they derive from the experience (Miller & Mair, 2015); and (2) the farm perspective, that is, why farms host volunteers and what the benefits and challenges are (Yamamoto & Engelsted, 2014). Based on qualitative research in Argentina, Miller and Mair (2015) identified six “horizons of understanding” for WWOOFers: learning about farming, connecting to nature, socializing with other people, experiencing life’s possibilities, being motivated towards political advocacy, and undergoing personal growth (Miller & Mair, 2015). Regarding the farm vantagepoint, studies suggest that both economic and lifestyle factors are significant (Mostafanezhad et al., 2016; Terry, 2014). In interviews with WWOOF farms in North Carolina, Terry (2014) heard farmers laud the value of socializing with WWOOFers, but farms also underscored the need for WWOOFers’ labor.

Ekers et al.’s (2015) research on interns, apprentices, and volunteers in Ontario, Canada yielded similar results. The authors conducted an online survey with a subset of farms that were recruited via a variety of channels (e.g., listservs).³ Smaller, less

³ Two-hundred farms responded to the survey, with 139 completing every question. There were both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

profitable farms were more likely to report a dependence on non-wage labor—though dependence was generally widespread.⁴ Farms' responses suggested that they were not merely taking advantage of cheap labor. Rather, they espoused the benefits for the non-wage workers (e.g., learning about farming), and they also stated that non-wage work presented challenges for farms (e.g., unreliability; Ekers et al., 2015). Towards the end of their article, Ekers and colleagues (2015) wrote about the need for more qualitative studies on the subject:

Additional research is needed to provide a more socially and spatially textured account of emergent forms of non-waged [agricultural] work, and this includes accounting for the subjective and lived dimensions of such work as well as the political possibilities and limits immanent to new forms of labor, education, and social movement building. (p. 718)

This dissertation endeavors to address this need via a case study of agricultural volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm); a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm); and a volunteer-run, faith-based farm (Faith Farm). I performed interviews with 16 volunteers and three farm leaders, as well as 62 observations totaling approximately 190 hours.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was adapted from Snyder and Omoto's (2008) Volunteer Process Model (see Figure 1.1).⁵ The model proposes that volunteering has antecedents, experiences, and consequences that operate at four different levels: (1) individual volunteers, (2) interpersonal, (3) organizational (e.g., farm), and (4)

⁴ At the farms in the sample, approximately two-thirds of the workers did not receive a wage. This proportion, however, did not reflect the number of hours worked. Thus, the relative roles of paid workers and non-wage workers were unclear (Ekers et al., 2015).

⁵ This model was originally developed through quantitative research with volunteers at HIV/AIDS organizations (Omoto & Snyder, 1993, 1995).

community or societal. Importantly, these processes and levels are intertwined. The congruence between volunteers' motivations and experiences impacts volunteers' satisfaction and the amount of time devoted to volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein, 2008).

	ANTECEDENTS	EXPERIENCES	CONSEQUENCES
INDIVIDUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics • Values • Early life experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New knowledge • Changed values • Better health and quality of life
INTERPERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networks • Group memberships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altered social networks • Social connections
FARM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Farm needs • Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of volunteers • Volunteer supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding opportunities • Changes in productivity
COMMUNITY / SOCIETAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative agriculture • Industrial agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of food • Community building • Other programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger sense of community • Increased food security

Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework. This figure shows the conceptual framework adapted from Snyder and Omoto's (2008) Volunteer Process Model. The text in the boxes are examples and should not be considered comprehensive. The processes and levels are also more fluid than they appear in the figure.

Specific Aims

The Volunteer Process Model, existing literature, and adapted conceptual framework informed the dissertation's three overarching aims, which were as follows:

Aim 1: Explore the antecedents and deterrents of volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland.

Aim 2: Understand the experience of volunteering for both volunteers and farm leaders at the three non-profit farms.

Aim 3: Explore the consequences of volunteering at the three non-profit farms.

As explained below, the aims do not neatly map onto the chapters in the dissertation. Chapter 6, for instance, addresses both the antecedences and consequences of volunteering for volunteers. Nevertheless, the aims guided the research methods. I asked interviewees about the three processes of volunteering. The aims also shaped the structure of the qualitative codebook.

Research Setting

I conducted the research at three non-profit farms in Maryland. One farm was located in Baltimore City, and the other two were within 25 miles of the city's boundaries. In this section, I provide an overview of Maryland, Baltimore City, and the farms themselves.

Maryland

Maryland possesses over 12,000 farms on more than two million acres (United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service [USDA NASS], 2014). In 2012, Maryland ranked 7th among U.S. states in inventory of broilers (i.e., chickens raised as meat); 30th in sales of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet

potatoes; 31st in sales of fruit, tree nuts, and berries; and 36th in total value of agricultural products sold (USDA NASS, 2018). With over six million acres, the state ranks 42nd in total land area (United States Census Bureau, 2010b). The state ranks slightly ahead of Vermont and well behind West Virginia, which places 41st and covers approximately 15,400,000 acres. Thus, while total agricultural productivity in Maryland is unexceptional, the quantity of food produced per amount of land is substantial.

Furthermore, 163 farmers' markets in Maryland operate either seasonally or year-round (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2018). Forty-six farmers' markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. About 166 farms in Maryland run a CSA program (Center for a Livable Future, 2015).⁶ Also, 10.4% of farms (i.e., 1,276 in total) marketed products directly to consumers, accounting for over \$28 million in sales (USDA NASS, 2014). As they engage consumers at a personal level, these farms may be considered civic agriculture sites.

Regarding demographics, Maryland has about six million people—of whom 59% are white, 31% are African-American, 7% are Asian, 3% have multiple races, and 1% is American Indian (United States Census Bureau, 2017).⁷ Nearly 10% of Marylanders report a Latino or Hispanic ethnicity. The median household income is \$76,000. Maryland is the home of 393,000 veterans. The state's population density is 600 people per square mile (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

⁶ The 2012 Census of Agriculture found that 119 Maryland farms sold products through CSA programs (USDA NASS, 2014). Thus, the numbers of farms are inexact and everchanging.

⁷ These numbers are rounded, and, consequently, do not add up to 100%. They are also estimates.

Baltimore City

Approximately 10% of Maryland’s population lives in Baltimore City (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Compared to the state as a whole, Baltimore City has more people of color, and the city is also poorer, on average (United States Census Bureau, 2010a, 2017). The racial breakdown from the 2010 Census is as follows: 30% white, 64% African-American, 2% Asian, and 2% identifying with multiple races (United States Census Bureau, 2010a).⁸ The median household income is around \$44,300—far less than for the entire state (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

In 2010, Baltimore City hired a food policy director. That same year, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) was created as a means “to improve food access, increase food production, and address these and many other food system issues through local, state, and national policy changes” (Santo, Yong, & Palmer, 2014. p. 202). The city approved its urban agriculture plan, Homegrown Baltimore, in 2013 (Baltimore Office of Sustainability, 2013). The plan promotes the production, distribution, and consumption of foods from Baltimore City.

There are at least 16 farmers’ markets that operate in Baltimore City (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2018).⁹ The city also has the Farm Alliance of Baltimore (2018), which is a network of urban farms that share resources and promote local agriculture. The Adopt-A-Lot program enables residents to claim and enhance Baltimore City’s vacant land (Baltimore Housing, n.d.).

⁸ About 2% of Marylanders had “some other race.” The proportion of American Indians was 0.4%.

⁹ This number is imprecise. The website of the Maryland Farmers’ Market Association (2018) lists about 20 markets in Baltimore City.

The Three Farms

City Farm. The first farm in the case study is City Farm, an urban community farm with two sites in Baltimore City. The primary location—hereafter called the “park location”—is inside a city park, where it is bordered by a school, a cemetery, railroad tracks, and sports fields. There are no neighboring residences at the park location. The second location, by contrast, is more residential. It is lined by city streets, rowhomes, and businesses. However, the city has demolished several rowhomes in recent years. There is also a school nearby.

City Farm’s mission has four components: enhance access to healthy foods in Baltimore City; educate and engage community members, especially diverse people from the city; promote environmental sustainability; and provide professional development opportunities (e.g., through the AmeriCorps program). Workshops, field trips, cooking demonstrations, and a composting program are among the farms’ offerings. Field trips typically occur at the park location, whereas community engagement is a priority at the residential location. The marketing channels include a CSA program, a farmers’ market, a mobile market, and restaurants. Additionally, the farm donates a portion (i.e., 5 to 10%) of the food produced to programs in Baltimore City.

For most of the year, the farm hosts volunteers during specified hours on two weekdays—one day at the park location and the other at the residential location. These weekday volunteer hours are continued at the park location in the wintertime. Moreover, City Farm welcomes volunteers on some Saturdays. Volunteers are asked to complete a liability waiver and sign-in, but advanced notice is only expected for groups of five or more.

Therapy Farm. Therapy Farm is also situated inside a park, but the park is outside of Baltimore City. Therapy Farm's main mission is to provide horticultural therapy to people of all ages and abilities. The farm offers formal programs for individuals and groups (e.g., military veterans). For example, a participant may use ergonomic tools to transplant flowers and improve their dexterity. Therapy Farm also endeavors to reduce visitors' stress via an aesthetically pleasing environment. During my research, the farm increased its focus on education. The most prominent example of this was the development of a beginning farmers training course, which was piloted in 2017.

Therapy Farm grows both produce and flowers. The products are sold to wholesalers, restaurants, farmers' market customers, and CSA customers, among others. The farm sometimes participates in or hosts community events. Therapy Farm also sells Christmas trees and wreaths for the winter holidays.

The process to become a long-term volunteer requires completing paperwork and passing a background check. Yet, once completed, volunteers can establish their own schedules. The staff members just request notification of any scheduling changes (e.g., cancellations). The farm is only open administratively in January, but volunteering outdoors is an option for the remaining eleven months of the year.

Faith Farm. Faith Farm is a faith-based, volunteer run farm that grows and donates food to organizations and individuals in need. The farm is in a rural location approximately 25 miles outside of Baltimore City. Approximately 1.7 million pounds of produce were given away in 2016, and two million pounds were distributed in 2015. Along with growing and donating food, Faith Farm aims to bring diverse groups of

people together to socialize and share the love of Jesus. The religious orientation of the farm is typified by the Bible verses etched on wooden beams in the pavilion area.

The farm grows on fields that span over 200 acres.¹⁰ Potatoes, corn, and beans are the three principal crops; yet, the crops also include turnips, apples, cabbage, and tomatoes, among others.

Volunteers essentially run Faith Farm. Two subcontract positions were established in 2016—one for farm production and one for marketing—but everyone else forgoes wages. Ten to fifteen volunteers function as staff members. They oversee the other volunteers, help maintain machinery, do most of the planting and food distribution, and work the most hours. In this dissertation, I refer to them as the “core volunteers.” The casual volunteers often belong to groups such as churches, schools, and businesses. They are most needed for harvesting from June through November.

Theory

Three theoretical perspectives are pertinent to this dissertation. In developing his concept of civic agriculture, Thomas Lyson was influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/2003) and Karl Polanyi (1957/2001).¹¹ Tocqueville was from France, but he traveled to the United States in the 1830s and subsequently wrote his seminal work, *Democracy in America*. According to Tocqueville, U.S. democracy fostered individualism—that is, a disconnect between individuals and broader society.¹² This disconnect could result in self-centeredness and the decline of the country. Fortunately,

¹⁰ A significant portion of the land was donated by other people and organizations.

¹¹ In addition to Tocqueville and Polanyi, Lyson (2004) also credited scholars such as Walter Goldschmidt. Goldschmidt (1947/1978) compared two California towns—Arvin and Dinuba—and concluded that the comparatively smaller scale of farms in Dinuba was responsible for better community indicators.

¹² By contrast, the people of France often relied on specific people (e.g., aristocrats)—rather than themselves—to meet their needs. This reliance minimized individualism in aristocratic societies, but it also limited the scope of public concern; people tended to care only for their smaller social groups.

the trend toward individualism was offset by newspapers, religion, and public associations.¹³ These institutions brought people together and propagated knowledge and caring. Tocqueville was not writing about civic agriculture, but non-profit farms may be considered public associations, as they endeavor to serve the public interest.

Compared to Tocqueville, Polanyi (1957/2001) focused more on economics and public policies than on individuals' behaviors. Yet, Polanyi's central point was similar: people pushed back against the perceived deterioration of society. Polanyi believed that the notion of a free, self-regulating, benevolent market was erroneous. Instead, market economies were dehumanizing because they treated everything (e.g., land, labor) as commodities. Such economies, therefore, almost became separated—or “disembedded”—from social concerns. Yet, as exemplified by the reforms of the New Deal, people mounted resistance before complete separation could occur.¹⁴ Civic agriculture likewise upholds the importance of caring for people and not just profits (Lyson, 2005).

Finally, J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) argued that past theories of political economy were correct to highlight the constraints that the global drive for profits imposed upon people's lives;¹⁵ however, such perspectives also underestimated the diversity of contemporary economies, as well as the potential for people to effect economic change. People were already engaged in productive non-wage work—including

¹³ Tocqueville did not view individualism as inherently beneficial or detrimental. He commended the freedom to think and care for one's self and family. Nevertheless, he also believed social groups were necessary for a functioning society.

¹⁴ Polanyi (1957/2001) referred to this as the “double movement” (p. 139). One movement was the market economy heading toward disembeddedness, and the other movement entailed people reinserting social protections (e.g., policies) into the economy.

¹⁵ J.K. Gibson-Graham is the penname of two individuals: Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson.

informal helping, volunteering, and barter.¹⁶ WWOOFing is an example of the latter, whereas my dissertation focuses on agricultural volunteering. Gibson-Graham (2006) also presented the concept of a “community economy,” which referred to the merging of wage and non-wage activities in order to meet communities’ multifarious needs. The concept shares many of the same principles as civic agriculture (Lyson, 2004).¹⁷

Definitions of Volunteering

Volunteering is not a bounded, unambiguous entity. Rather, it is a phenomenon that has real implications but can be defined a variety of ways (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Handy et al., 2000; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Some definitions of volunteering include informal helping such as assisting with a neighbor’s yardwork or caring for a parent (Martinez, Crooks, Kim, & Tanner, 2011; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Yet, informal helping is often done due to expectations of reciprocity or feelings of obligation. When people help a neighbor, friend, or family member, they frequently expect the favor to be returned later. Or, individuals may feel obligated to assist ailing family members.¹⁸ These expectations and feelings are not the same with volunteering, as volunteers’ efforts are typically directed toward organizations and the populations they serve—not at specific individuals (Musick & Wilson, 2008). In addition to this

¹⁶ Gibson-Graham (2006) compared economic activities to an iceberg. The formal wage economy was akin to the tip of the iceberg, as it was more readily apparent. The rest of the economy (e.g., volunteering) was more like the underwater portion of the iceberg—sizable but not as noticeable (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 69-70).

¹⁷ As the following quotation illustrates, Lyson’s language resembled Gibson-Graham’s: “The picture of rural life presented to us by neoclassical economics...is framed in terms of well-defined markets and constructed categories of land, labor, capital, and management, which are organized to fit the production function. These categories typically do not articulate with the community and household relations that can and do structure economic activities” (Lyson, 2004, p. 23).

¹⁸ This distinction between volunteering and informal helping is useful. Still, as Musick and Wilson (2008) assert, volunteering can be similarly shaped by social factors: “It [i.e., volunteering] can also be seen as a duty, something we believe we owe to our community or to a group or organization to which we belong” (p. 24). Furthermore, according to Merrell (2008), women who volunteered with the National Health Service believed that the relationships between volunteers and health clinics were mutually beneficial.

distinction, an expansive definition of volunteering may lack meaning for organizations and be more difficult to measure (Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010).

Another way to define volunteering is to examine motives (Musick & Wilson, 2008). People may associate volunteering with selfless motivations, whereas largely self-interested motivations (e.g., gaining social status) may preclude someone from being viewed as a volunteer (Handy et al., 2000). Nevertheless, motivation-based definitions are challenging for at least three reasons: (1) people rarely, if ever, act with purely altruistic motives (Smith 1981); (2) volunteers can be impactful to organizations, regardless of their reasons for volunteering; and (3) there is no consensus about what signifies appropriate motivations (Musick & Wilson, 2008).

Finally, a volunteer may be defined practically “as a person who, out of free will and without wages, works for a not-for-profit organization which is formally organized and has as its purpose service to someone or something other than its membership” (Jenner, 1982, p. 30).¹⁹ This utilitarian definition makes volunteering simpler to measure and meaningful from an organizational standpoint. As such, I primarily adopted this definition for the dissertation research, yet I also remained attentive to ambiguities. For instance, a number of people at City Farm’s residential location participated in a workshare program, whereby they received food vouchers in exchange for volunteering. I treated them as volunteers because their behaviors and statuses appeared to be different

¹⁹ Cnaan and colleagues (1996) found that people’s perceptions of choice influenced whether or not they considered someone to be a volunteer. For example, a person who avoids jail by doing community service may not be viewed as a volunteer. Similarly, an infant cannot be a volunteer both because their helpfulness is limited and their ability to choose an activity is constrained (Cnaan et al., 1996; Handy et al., 2000).

than staff members'. Still, this decision was debatable given the amount of food the workshare members received.²⁰

In sum, there is a lack of agreement about how to define volunteering. For this dissertation, I decided to focus on formal volunteering for organizations; I also included individuals who gathered service hours (e.g., for school) or received free food. I did not limit the research to “pure” volunteers (Cnaan et al., 1996). Even so, my definition incorporated three commonly perceived attributes of volunteering: (1) an absence of formal wages; (2) partial or complete freedom of choice;²¹ and (3) potential benefits for other people besides the volunteers (Cnaan et al., 1996).

Organization of Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation is divided in six chapters. In Chapter 2, I review the existing literature about volunteering in general.²² Additionally, I summarize the relevant research about agriculture and farm labor. Chapter 3 contains details regarding the research methods. Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 are manuscripts with distinct focuses. Chapter 4 explores two critiques of civic agriculture—specifically, that it lacks community and cannot adequately address food insecurity (DeLind, 1999; Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006; Pole & Gray, 2013). For the exploration, I use data from the three non-profit farms, and I also incorporate the aforementioned perspectives of Tocqueville (1840/2003) and Polanyi (1957/2001). Chapter 5 possesses two aims: (1) describe the scope of tasks that volunteers may perform; and (2) explore the ways that volunteers can

²⁰ As explained in Chapter 4, the workshare members used to receive \$10 worth of food for three hours of volunteering. Yet, starting in 2017, the value was tripled to \$30.

²¹ Some volunteers were children who came with groups (e.g., schools, churches) or their families. While it could be argued that they did not have complete autonomy, the farms did not force them to volunteer.

²² The review is not intended to be exhaustive. For a lengthier examination, see Musick and Wilson's (2008) book titled *Volunteers: A Social Profile*.

contribute to or detract from farms' missions. In Chapter 6, I explore the antecedents and consequences of volunteering for volunteers. Finally, Chapter 7 includes a recap of the dissertation's results, implications, strengths, and limitations.

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CHAPTER 2: ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

I begin this brief chapter by providing an overview of the literature regarding volunteering in general—with a special focus on antecedents and consequences for volunteers. The existing research has often relied on national survey data. Then, I summarize previous studies about the possible benefits of agricultural involvement, as well as trends in civic agriculture.

General Literature about Volunteering

Between September 2014 and September 2015, approximately one-fourth of people formally volunteered for an organization in the United States (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016).¹ These data emerged from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which only captured formal volunteering; informal helping was not part of the survey's definition. A greater percentage of women volunteered than men—27.8% compared to 21.8%. High volunteer rates were also evident among college graduates (38.8%), part-time workers (31.1%), married people (29.9%), parents of children (31.3%), and people between 35 and 44 years of age (28.9%; BLS, 2016). About one-third of volunteers contributed 100 hours or more, while 21.1% contributed less than 15 hours (BLS, 2016).

Relatedly, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) estimates that the economic implications of volunteering for U.S. organizations are huge. Volunteers contributed nearly eight billion hours and \$184 billion worth of labor during

¹ These data are for people 16 years of age or older (BLS, 2016); individuals younger than 16 are excluded.

the aforementioned time period (CNCS, 2016).² Volunteers may replace staff members, especially when organizations encounter financial difficulties (Handy, Mook, & Quarter, 2008). However, volunteers often complement, rather than replace, paid workers (Brudney & Gazley, 2002; Handy et al., 2008). Thus, volunteering is a common and potentially impactful activity for both volunteers and organizations (see e.g., Handy & Srinivasan, 2004).

Antecedents and Consequences

Antecedents. Religiosity, education, income, pro-social values, youth volunteering, and association memberships are among the determinants positively associated with volunteering (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Einolf, 2011; Gesthuizen & Scheepers, 2012; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Liu & Besser, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Yet, these associations are not always direct or linear. The relationship with income, for example, is mediated by being asked to volunteer, as higher-income individuals are recruited more frequently (Bryant, Jeon-Slaughter, Kang, & Tax, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008).³ Additionally, race may moderate the effects of income on volunteering. Musick, Wilson, and Bynum (2000) found that there were no statistically significant differences in volunteering for African-Americans when stratified by income. However, this insignificance was not evident among whites; whites with higher incomes were more likely to volunteer.

² The estimate of volunteers' economic value is inexact, as it is based on the average wage for people employed in non-agricultural industries in the U.S.—over \$23 per hour (Independent Sector, n.d., 2016). The estimate, therefore, assumes that people volunteer in activities for which they have skills (e.g., a lawyer providing pro-bono services). Nevertheless, even if this assumption is not always correct and the figure is an overestimate, the economic potential of volunteering is substantial.

³ Among the people who volunteered between September 2014 and September 2015, approximately 41% became connected to an organization because someone (e.g., a friend, a member of the organization) asked them to volunteer (BLS, 2016).

According to the 2015 CPS, the percentages of volunteers among whites, African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians were 26.4%, 19.3%, 17.9%, and 15.5%, respectively (BLS, 2016). Yet, the higher percentage for whites warrants three caveats. First, among volunteers, the amount of time contributed does not vary consistently between whites and African-Americans (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Next, income and educational disparities may partially account for racial and ethnic differences in volunteer rates (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Musick et al., 2000). Lastly, African-Americans are significantly less likely to be asked to volunteer, thereby depressing volunteer rates for that demographic (Bryant et al., 2003).⁴

Moreover, life circumstances influence not only whether people volunteer but also the activities they choose (Lancee & Radl, 2014). Married parents of schoolchildren tend to have high rates of volunteering because they often help with school and youth activities (BLS, 2016; Boraas, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Sundeen, 1990).⁵ Older adults, by contrast, generally favor giving time to religious institutions and social service organizations (BLS, 2016; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Kim & Hong, 1998).

People's motivations may also shape volunteering. Clary, Snyder, and Ridge (1992) developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). This 30-item inventory assesses volunteers' scores for six motivations—"Social," "Value," "Career," "Understanding," "Protective," and "Esteem"—and researchers have used and modified it extensively (Clary et al., 1992; see e.g., Brayley et al., 2011; Kim, Zhang, &

⁴ Other factors that might help explain racial and ethnic differences include immigration status and social networks. Yet, Musick and Wilson (2008) argue that cultural dissimilarities are not responsible for gaps in volunteer rates.

⁵ This relationship, too, appears to be complicated. Sundeen (1990) found that a greater proportion of parents with school-age children volunteered than did unmarried people without children. However, among volunteers, unmarried people without children contributed more hours, on average—perhaps a reflection of fewer familial responsibilities (Sundeen, 1990).

Connaughton, 2010).⁶ An examination of data from volunteers in Australian faith-based organizations identified only four motivations, rather than six. The protective function was not evident in the factor analysis, while the authors merged two other motivations (i.e., understanding and enhancement) into a new one called “enrichment.” Therefore, the VFI highlights common motivations for volunteers generally, but volunteers’ reasons for volunteering vary across contexts. As the match between volunteers’ motivations and experiences impacts satisfaction and intensity of volunteering, this variation needs to be better understood (Finkelstein, 2008).

Importantly, there are noteworthy barriers to volunteering—including a lack of time, money, mobility, or interest (Schuldt, Ferrara, & Wojcicki, 2001; Sundeen, Raskoff, & Garcia, 2007). In response to a national survey in Canada, approximately three-fourths of volunteers and two-thirds of non-volunteers indicated that a lack of time prevented them from volunteering more (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, & Gibbons, 2009). Interestingly, 44% of non-volunteers cited not being asked as a barrier to volunteering (Hall et al., 2009).

Consequences. While additional research is required to identify the casual mechanisms, previous studies suggest that volunteering leads to improvements in physical health, mental health, quality of life, and life satisfaction (Borgonovi, 2008; Jenkinson et al., 2013; Okun, Yeung, & Brown, 2013; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; van Willigen, 2000; Wheeler et al., 1998). Enlarged social networks and enhanced job

⁶ Each motivation is scored based on agreement or disagreement with five general items. The motivation of “understanding,” for example, relates to learning, introspection, and a changed outlook (Clary et al., 1992, p. 336).

prospects are among other potential benefits of volunteering (Morrow-Howell, Hong, & Tang, 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1998, 2003).

Still, volunteers may also encounter challenges. Though perhaps unrelated to agricultural volunteering, some volunteer activities (e.g., hospice care) can induce stress and burnout (Claxton-Oldfield, 2015); emergency response volunteers commonly struggle with work-family conflict (Cowlshaw, Birch, McLennan, & Hayes, 2012); and disputes between staff members and volunteers—or a paucity of organizational support—may pose problems (Moreno-Jiménez & Hidalgo, 2010; Paull & Omari, 2015).

Gaps in the Literature about Volunteering

In sum, numerous studies have been conducted about the consequences and, particularly, the antecedents of volunteering. However, researchers have paid insufficient attention to the actual experience of volunteering and how it may differ across settings. In a review article, Wilson wrote about the need for more qualitative data:

The middle stage of the process model—the experience of volunteering—has received far less scrutiny. Practical considerations, including a desire to understand how to motivate and keep volunteers, has driven much of the research on volunteer dynamics, but more needs to be learned about the volunteer experience itself, including how volunteers relate to clients, paid staff, and other volunteers. (Wilson, 2012, p. 201)

As I asserted in Chapter 1 and continue to justify below, the experience of volunteering in civic agriculture warrants special attention.

Civic Agriculture

Civic Agriculture and Volunteering

In addition to the need for more research about non-wage agricultural labor, the conceptual underpinnings of civic agriculture, and the calls for better understandings of different volunteer contexts, there are reasons to believe that volunteering at civic

agriculture sites offers unique benefits (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015; Lyson, 2004; Wilson, 2012). For example, Obach and Tobin (2014) discovered that customers at civic agriculture sites (e.g., CSA programs, farmers' markets) were significantly more likely to be volunteers than members of a randomly selected comparison group. The measure of volunteering was general; the customers could have volunteered at any organization—not just farms. The research design was also cross-sectional, which made the directionality of the association impossible to determine. Still, the research indicates that civic agriculture and volunteering are linked.

Moreover, research with CSA customers, community garden participants, and school garden participants suggests that engagement in civic agriculture can spur changes in knowledge, behaviors, taste preferences, and priorities (Allen, Rossi, Woods, & Davis, 2016; Barnridge et al., 2013; Cohen, Gearhart, & Garland, 2012; Cox et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2015; Parmer, Salisbury-Glennon, Shannon, & Struempfer, 2009).⁷ Despite not focusing on volunteers, the results of these studies may have implications for agricultural volunteering. Also, in one study from the Netherlands, gardening resulted in significantly more stress reduction than reading—a finding with potential relevance to volunteering (van den Berg and Custer, 2011).

Lastly, volunteers may help farms provide food to people in need (Dimitri, Oberholtzer, and Pressman, 2016). Over the course of a month, fifty volunteers (i.e., “gleaners”) in Washington State harvested and donated 85,000 pounds of food to an organization (Hoisington, Butkus, Garrett, & Beerman, 2001). Yet, additional studies are needed to understand agricultural volunteers' potential to impact communities.

⁷ Cox et al. (2008) referred to customers' shifts from more immediate concerns (e.g., personal health, family) to broader concerns (e.g., sustainability) as the “graduation effect” (p. 212).

Trends

Between 2006 and 2014, the number of U.S. farmers' markets increased by 180% (Low et al., 2015). Nearly 8,000 more farms sold directly to consumers in 2012 than in 2007.⁸ In 2012, direct-to-consumer transactions equaled 0.3% of all farm sales—that is, \$1.3 billion. In terms of dollars, this amount was far greater than in 1997 (Low et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2010); however, when adjusting for inflation, the \$1.3 billion represented a 1% decline from 2007 (Low et al., 2015).⁹ Thus, civic agriculture's market share is small and seems to be leveling off, but the number of civic agriculture sites continues to rise.¹⁰

⁸ 144,530 farms marketed directly to consumers in 2012 (Low et al., 2015).

⁹ One potential reason for this decline is an increase in sales directly to restaurants, stores, and other intermediated marketing channels (Low et al., 2015; Low & Vogel, 2011).

¹⁰ ¹⁰ The market share of civic agriculture is especially small if only counting sales directly to consumers. However, Lyson (2004) included “restaurant agriculture” as an example of civic agriculture (p. 91). Low and colleagues (2015) estimated around \$6.1 billion in sales were completed through both direct marketing channels and intermediated marketing channels (e.g., restaurants, grocery stores) in 2012.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODS

I conducted a multiple-case study of three non-profit farms in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm); a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm); and a faith-based, volunteer-run farm (Faith Farm). The two methods were participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Specifically, I performed 62 observations spanning about 190 hours. I also interviewed 16 volunteers and three farm leaders. All data were analyzed using a combined inductive and deductive approach to coding (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board examined the research plan and designated the dissertation as exempt from ethical oversight. Below, I provide additional information about site selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Site Selection

I deliberately selected the three farms because they possessed unique missions, volunteer models, and locations. City Farm has multiple missions, hosts volunteers at predetermined times each week, and is located in Baltimore City; Therapy Farm concentrates on horticultural therapy and education, offers flexible scheduling to volunteers, and is situated just outside of Baltimore City; and Faith Farm donates all of the food, is essentially run by volunteers, and is in a less populated area about 25 miles from Baltimore City. Therefore, the case study sites enabled me to compare and contrast volunteering across diverse contexts (Yin, 2014).¹

¹ According to Yin (2014), the selection of dissimilar cases allows for “theoretical replication,” whereby the phenomenon being studied (e.g., volunteering) manifests itself in different but anticipatable ways (p. 57).

Data Collection

Participant Observation

Between April and December 2016, I performed 50 observations as a volunteer. Nine more observations occurred between May and July 2017. Including both time periods, the approximate totals for each farm were as follows: 76.75 hours from 27 observations at City Farm; 88.5 hours from 25 observations at Therapy Farm; and 24.5 hours from seven observations at Faith Farm.² In addition to the 59 observations, I attended and recorded notes for two community events related to City Farm and one event at Therapy Farm. The events occurred in December 2016, June 2017, and November 2017. My attendance lasted approximately four hours combined. Hence, I completed 62 observations altogether, with the number of hours amounting to about 190.

According to Gold's (1958) classification of fieldwork, I was a participant-as-observer. I served as a volunteer myself and recorded field notes after each day of volunteering; I did not write field notes when I was at the farms.³ Thus, participation was prioritized over observation. I also developed relationships over time and was open about my status as a researcher (Gold, 1958).

I recorded my field notes with the help of a semi-structured observation guide (see Figure 3.1). The sections included types of volunteers, estimated number of volunteers, impressions of demographics, tasks that were performed, information about volunteering, information about farm operations, and personal reflections. The reflections

² I refer to these as "approximate totals" primarily because I often rounded times to the nearest quarter hour. Moreover, I conducted 16 observations at City Farm's park location and 11 observations at City Farm's residential location. The numbers of hours were 47.5 and 27.25, respectively.

³ When the opportunity arose (e.g., during breaks, prior to leaving), I sometimes recorded words or brief phrases to aid with memorization. However, the official field notes were always written after leaving the farms.

Participant Observation Guide	
Date/time/location of visit:	
Written at	
Types of volunteers: <input type="checkbox"/> Solo <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Group names:	
Notes about types:	
Approximate # of volunteers: <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 + Rough est.:	
General impressions of volunteer/staff demographics (age/race/gender/etc.). <i>Note: section not intended to categorize individual volunteers or staff members.</i>	
Volunteer tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> Harvesting <input type="checkbox"/> Planting <input type="checkbox"/> Weeding <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Staff tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> Harvesting <input type="checkbox"/> Planting <input type="checkbox"/> Weeding <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Researcher tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> Harvesting <input type="checkbox"/> Planting <input type="checkbox"/> Weeding <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Notes about tasks:	
Noteworthy conversations/information about volunteering. <i>Note: section not for highly personal or lengthy conversations.</i>	
Noteworthy conversations/information about farm operations. <i>Note: section not for highly personal or lengthy conversations.</i>	
Personal Reflections:	
Descriptions/drawings of visual information (e.g., marketing materials about volunteering):	
Finished at	

Figure 3.1. Participant observation guide. This figure shows the semi-structured guide used for writing field notes.

contained my own impressions about volunteering, emerging thoughts related to the research (e.g., comparisons among the farms), and potential biases. They compelled me to be “reflexive” about my own identity and position at the farms (see e.g., Berger, 2015).

The field notes varied in length but were more than 1,100 words, on average—counting 340 words of reflections but excluding the words already on the observation guide. Although my goal was not to provide “thick description,” I produced an abundance of data (Geertz, 1973).

The participant observation offered at least five benefits. First, it helped me identify, connect with, and recruit volunteers to be interviewed. Next, it enhanced my ability to tailor interview questions to specific farms and interviewees. Third, I was able to write about my own experiences as a volunteer. Fourth, the participant observation allowed me to observe changes across time. Finally, I was able to collect data about what volunteers actually did at the three farms (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Reflexivity. Finlay (2002) described reflexivity as “thoughtful, conscious self-awareness” (p. 532). The points of consideration for reflexivity include the researcher’s own histories and attributes (e.g., age, race), personal experiences, and position vis-à-vis other people in the research setting. Moreover, while potentially valuable, reflexivity is an ongoing and imperfect process. Total self-awareness is not achievable (Finlay, 2002).

In the personal reflections section of my field notes, I wrote about the significance of my identity as a young, white, church-going male. On one occasion, a core volunteer at Faith Farm astutely observed that the religious activities did not make me feel uncomfortable. Yet, I also reflected that other people might have a different reaction:

This was the first time where my personal background and value system were so obviously intertwined with the participant observation and how I was perceived.

The person who implored me to write about Jesus also said they could tell I was a person of faith because I appeared comfortable with the praying...I do not come from a charismatic Christian background, but I have spent much of my life—and all of my adult years—attending and being involved in church. As such, I feel at ease at a place like Faith Farm, though I also recognize that not everyone would feel the same way.

— Personal Reflections, October 2016, Faith Farm

Besides religion, the reflections about my identity—and other volunteers’ demographics—mainly centered on the farms’ efforts to engage people from diverse backgrounds. On one occasion, I conversed with an African-American man about a variety of topics, including racial segregation in U.S. cities. I thought afterward that the interaction seemed relatively unique:

The pleasant conversation not only was substantive and cordial; it also likely would not occur in most settings. Some cross-demographic dialogue does happen occasionally in academia and at church. But when it happens at a farm—and this certainly was not the first time—it feels especially rewarding.

— Personal reflections, September 2016, City Farm

In another instance, I wrote, “There were children [at the residential location] having fun, college students making a difference, and older volunteers contributing meaningfully... I do not mean to idealize the experience...But the heterogeneity was remarkable” (Personal reflections, May 2017, City Farm).

Moreover, I contemplated my position as both a researcher and a repeat volunteer. For example, a staff member from City Farm asked me to demonstrate a task to other volunteers: “I was overtly deemed an experienced volunteer, as I was asked to provide instruction about [removing] the fig leaves...Since I have now been to the farm many times, I am treated differently than more casual, one-time volunteers” (Personal reflections, October 2016, City Farm). Another time, I reflected about my potential influence as a participant observer (i.e., volunteer) on future interviews:

Working around people inevitably leads to conversations...I'm trying to leave the pointed questions for the interviews, and I also don't want to give away too many of my own opinions. Even so, conversations necessitate sharing and give and take. As such, I just need to be mindful of how I may or may not be influencing the research.

— Personal reflections, June 2016, Therapy Farm

Only two weeks later, I reexamined my reservations about talking freely: “The natural conversations in the fields are important; and while I should always be reflexive and mindful of my role as a researcher, it is OK to embrace participant observation as a useful method” (Personal reflections, June 2016, Therapy Farm).

As the following field notes illustrate, I considered additional reasons my experiences could be different than other volunteers’—namely my consistent volunteering, slow work rate, and suboptimal physical condition:

Some of this exhaustion [from volunteering] can be attributed to [me] being 28 years old and not in the best of shape. Diet and poor sleep quality could also be factors. Nevertheless, outdoor farm work is no joke.

— Personal reflections, September 2016, City Farm

After I referred to myself as a terrible and slow farmer, [a staff member] reminded me that it's not about speed and that I was nominated Volunteer of the Year for a reason...I should not be overly humble about my farming abilities. It is true that I am not the fastest farmer, nor am I the most productive overall. Nevertheless, the farm clearly appreciates and values my contributions, and I should not forget that.

— Personal reflections, May 2017, City Farm

In sum, the personal reflections were neither lengthy nor perfect. I was not able to attain a complete understanding of my influence on the research process. Still, the reflections enabled me to be reflexive about my own identity and behaviors—and to achieve a greater understanding than would have been possible otherwise. The process of reflexivity continued throughout the process of data analysis and writing. In Chapter 4,

for instance, I note my personal preference for substantive conversations and how it may have impacted my interactions with volunteers and staff members.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 volunteers and three farm leaders. The interviewees were nine volunteers and two farm leaders from City Farm, five volunteers and one farm leader from Therapy Farm, and two volunteers from Faith Farm. To be eligible for interviews, volunteers needed to meet four criteria: (1) volunteered at the one of the case study sites during the study period; (2) engaged in tasks directly related to farming (e.g., planting, harvesting); (3) reached at least 18 years of age; and (4) was comfortable speaking in English. The three farm leaders interacted with and made decisions about volunteers.

I recruited volunteers for interviewees via a combination of convenience and maximum variation sampling. Ten of the interviewees were approached by me directly. My goal was to recruit a diverse sample, representing a range of demographics (e.g., age, race, gender) and experiences as a volunteer. In two instances, I made an announcement about my research to groups of volunteers. These announcements resulted in six interviews total—four from Therapy Farm and two from City Farm. The group from Therapy Farm had been volunteering consistently for multiple weeks.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service. Furthermore, interviewees filled out a brief demographic questionnaire. The demographics for volunteers are shown in Table 3.1 below. The question about race and ethnicity was open-ended and yielded a variety of responses. Nine volunteer interviewees wrote “White” or “Caucasian,” and other answers included “Middle Eastern” and

“American.” Only three volunteer interviewees were 35 years of age or older. With nine females and seven males, the breakdown by gender was nearly even. Thus, interviewees were disproportionately young and white, but they were diverse in other regards. To protect confidentiality, the demographics of farm leaders are not presented here.

Table 3.1

Demographic characteristics of interviewees

Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity		Age in Years	
African of Nigerian descent	1	18-24	10
American	1	25-34	3
American Black	1	35-54	1
Asian	1	55 or over	2
Black	1		
Caucasian	2	Education	
Middle Eastern	1	High school degree or equivalent	1
Other	1	Some college but no degree	7
White	4	Associate's degree	1
White / Caucasian	1	Bachelor's degree	5
White / Jewish	1	Graduate degree	1
White, not Hispanic	1	Professional degree	1
Gender		Employment Status	
Female	9	Employed, working full-time	5
Male	7	Employed, working part-time	4
		Not employed, looking for employment	2
Length of Volunteering		Not employed, NOT looking for employment	3
First-time volunteer	3	Retired	2
Repeat volunteer	13		

I used separate interview guides for volunteers and farm leaders (see Appendix). However, all interviews covered the three stages delineated by the Volunteer Process Model—that is, antecedents, experiences, and consequences (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). I posed follow-up questions, when appropriate, and also tailored some questions to particular interviewees and locations. For example, I asked interviewees from Therapy

Farm about their perceptions of the horticultural therapy. The average duration of the interviews was about 30 minutes. The longest interview lasted 52 minutes, and the briefest was 16 minutes. I obtained verbal consent from all interviewees, and I also offered participants \$20 in compensation for their time.

In contrast to the participant observation, the interviews mainly elicited volunteers' and farm leaders' expressible perceptions. Volunteers discussed their level of satisfaction with volunteering, and farm leaders articulated the reasons for recruiting and hosting volunteers. These data about perceptions and decision making complemented the information collected through participant observation. Thus, I employed and triangulated multiple methods, which enhanced the rigor or "credibility" of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1999).

Qualitative Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from the interviews and participant observation using a combined inductive and deductive approach (Bradley et al., 2007). The Volunteer Process Model remained as the framework for the research, but unexpected findings were also allowed to emerge (see Figure 3.2; Snyder & Omoto, 2008). I was the only coder, which was appropriate given my deep involvement in the entire research process—from design to interpretation (Janesick, 2003; see also Higgins & Hirsch, 2008).

The qualitative coding involved an iterative, multi-step process (see Figure 3.3). I started by structuring the codebook according to the Volunteer Process Model—with Antecedents, Experiences, and Consequences as the highest-level codes (see Figure 3.2; Snyder & Omoto, 2008). I then became familiar with the first 51 field notes and 13

High-Level Code	Mid-Level Code	Low-Level Code(s)
ANTECEDENTS	Individual (ANT)	Exercise, Learning, Previous experiences with other farms and/or gardening, Religion - personal, Staying busy, Stress relief / Nature, Values - not religion
	Interpersonal (ANT)	Group connections, Personal connections
	Farm (ANT)	Community engagement, Education - farm, Need for labor, Religion - farm
	Community-Society (ANT)	Geography, Societal trends / Food movement
EXPERIENCES	Individual (EXP)	Challenges for volunteers; Education / Tours; Experiences with non-farms; Tasks - harvesting, planting, or weeding; Tasks - other, Volunteer satisfaction / dissatisfaction; Volunteer times, scheduling, and availability
	Interpersonal (EXP)	Conversations, Expressions of thanks, Social activities - not religious, Social activities - religious
	Farm (EXP)	Challenges for farms, Decisions about volunteer tasks, Farm leader satisfaction / dissatisfaction, Farm scheduling, Farm supervision, Presence or frequency of volunteers, Staff tasks, Working efficiently, Working inefficiently
	Community-Society (EXP)	Neighbors / Passersby
CONSEQUENCES	Individual (CON)	Better eating habits, Changed values, Expectations of return, Other health effects, Professional or educational development
	Interpersonal (CON)	Connections / Friendships
	Farm (CON)	Sustainability of the farm
	Community-Society (CON)	Beautification, Increased food access
Miscellaneous	N/A	AmeriCorps, General feelings about volunteering, Staff recommendations for improvement, Volunteer recommendations for improvement, Weather, Website / Social media
Demographics	N/A	Age, Gender, Race / Ethnicity
General Farm Information	N/A	Artwork, signs, and promotional materials; Community events, Educational activities for young people, Farm production, Farm therapy, History, Infrastructure and tools, Location, Marketing strategies, Mission, Partnerships, Staffing
Personal Reflections	N/A	Reflexivity / Positionality

Figure 3.2. Structure of the codebook. This figure shows the names of the codes in the codebook. There were 86 codes in total—seven high-level codes, 12 mid-level codes, and 67 low-level codes.

transcripts. Next, I developed a coding hierarchy that included the names of sub-codes but not definitions. This hierarchy was discussed with my advisor and refined.

Once the hierarchy was satisfactory, I added definitions to form an initial codebook. Most of the sub-codes, therefore, emerged inductively from reading of the data. Yet, a small number of codes (e.g., “Staff recommendations for improvement”) were created in anticipation of the interviews with farm leaders.

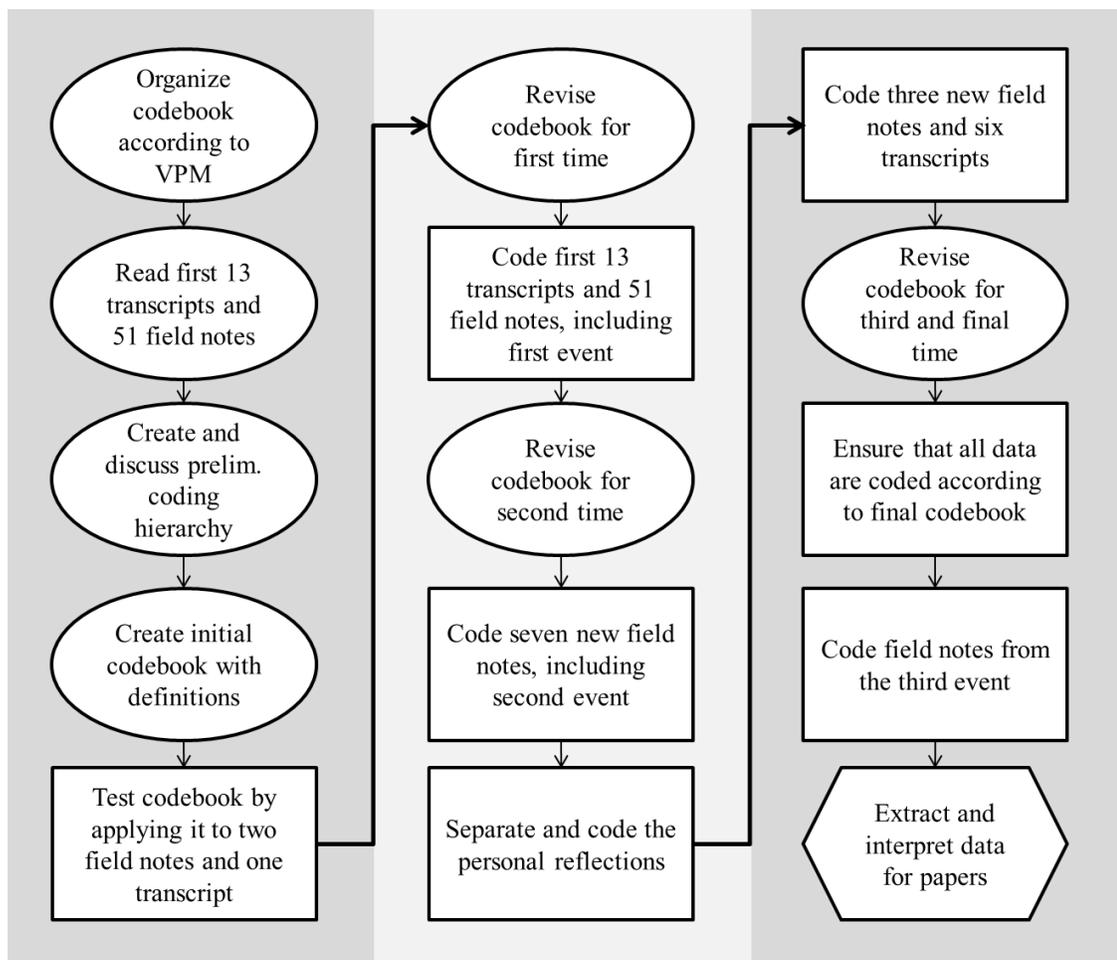


Figure 3.3. Fifteen steps in the qualitative coding process. The circles signify a step related to codebook development and revision, and the squares indicate the application of the codes to the data.

After testing the codebook on one transcript and two field notes—and with the help of memos—I made revisions. The codebook was revised two additional times throughout the data analysis. I coded all 19 transcripts and 62 field notes. Finally, I extracted data and identified exemplary quotations. MAXQDA software assisted with the data extraction and interpretation, particularly by allowing me to readily retrieve data and make comparisons across farms and data sources.

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CHAPTER 4: PAPER ONE

Volunteering and civic agriculture: Tocqueville and Polanyi vis-à-vis community building and food security at three Maryland farms

Abstract

Distinct from industrial agriculture, civic agriculture refers to agricultural endeavors that are locally centered and participatory. The sociologist Thomas Lyson developed the term and cited two scholars as foundational: (1) Alexis de Tocqueville, who lauded the ability of associations to counter individualism in the U.S.; and (2) Karl Polanyi, who observed that people eventually resisted the dehumanization created by free markets. Civic agriculture can be enacted via direct marketing channels. Farms may also offer opportunities such as workshops, field trips, and volunteering. Despite its purported benefits (e.g., community building, combating food insecurity), a number of scholars have questioned whether civic agriculture's ideals align with its realities. In this paper, I explore this question using interview and observational data about volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland. I conclude that there are four facets of volunteering that augmented the sense of community, namely the substantive conversations, the social connections formed, the interactions with passersby, and the feelings of a common purpose. However, the sense of community was dampened by the high volunteer and staff turnover, the distant origins of volunteers, and the solitariness of some tasks. Moreover, the farms largely represented the social resistance espoused by Polanyi, but the farms' contributions, however sizable, were not limited to the production and provision of food. Instead, the farms aimed to perform multiple functions (e.g., providing education, promoting socialization).

Introduction

Since the turn of the 19th century, U.S. agriculture has become ever-more industrialized. The results of this industrialization are numerous. Machines have replaced human labor, thereby disconnecting consumers from the origins of their food (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005); farmworkers frequently encounter inflexible and dangerous working conditions (Holmes, 2007; Wang, Myers, & Layne, 2011); and the widespread use of chemicals (e.g., pesticides, fertilizers) contributes to the loss of biodiversity (Kleijn et al., 2009).

This trend toward industrialization has helped farmers increase crop yields, meet consumer demand, and feed a rapidly growing population (Dimitri et al., 2005; Pingali, 2012). However, according to some scholars, these increases have come at the expense of the environment and human health (Horrigan, Lawrence, & Walker, 2002). In an article published in 2004, Tegtmeier and Duffy estimated that the externalized costs of crop production for the U.S. amounted to somewhere between \$5.0 billion and \$16.2 billion. The costs included damage to soil (e.g., erosion), water (e.g., treatment for pathogens), air, biodiversity, and humans (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2004).

The notion of “sustainable” or “alternative” agriculture emerged as a response to the perceived deleteriousness of industrial agriculture (Beus & Dunlap, 1990; Horrigan, et al., 2002). Based on one analysis of popular writings, alternative agriculture possesses six distinguishing features: decentralization of production and ownership; independence from external, non-local resources; an emphasis on the community and respect for farm labor; the pursuit of harmony with nature; crop diversity; and short-term restraint in favor of long-term outcomes (Beus & Dunlap, 1990). Similarly, attendees at an agriculture

conference indicated that sustainable food systems should be not only economically viable but also participatory, supportive of cultural diversity, oriented towards social relationships, and not only about profits (Kloppenburger, Lezberg, De Master, Stevenson, & Hendrickson, 2000).¹

Overview of Civic Agriculture

As a subtype of alternative agriculture, the sociologist Thomas Lyson (2000) developed the concept of civic agriculture and defined it as “a locally-based agricultural and food production system that is tightly linked to a community’s social and economic development” (p. 42). The concept underscores the importance of linking people to the production of their food, which makes them better, more informed “food citizens” (Lyson, 2004, p. 77). Civic agriculture also upholds the importance of caring for the environment and ensuring agricultural land remains usable for future generations. Thus, civic agriculture aims to embody the characteristics identified by Beus and Dunlap (1990), as well as Kloppenburger and colleagues (2000).

Civic agriculture can be enacted via direct-to-consumer marketing strategies such as farmers’ markets, food stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs (Lyson, 2000). Farms may also offer various opportunities for community members, including workshops, field trips, community events, and volunteering—the latter of which is the focus of this paper (Sumner, Mair, & Nelson, 2010).²

The following are among the potential benefits of civic agriculture that have been cited in the academic literature: shifts in consumers’ priorities from immediate concerns

¹ The other perceived qualities of a sustainable food system included being environmentally friendly, as local as possible, health-promoting, honoring of food, and appreciative of the seasons (Kloppenburger et al., 2000).

² Civic agriculture can also be practiced in community gardens, but I concentrate on farms.

(e.g., being healthy) to broader concerns about the environment (Cox et al., 2008); the formation of strong, diverse communities (Trauger, Sachs, Barbercheck, Brasier, & Kiernan, 2010); and the donation of food to organizations (Hoisington, Butkus, Garrett, & Beerman, 2001). Still, as discussed later through the lens of agricultural volunteering, civic agriculture's ideals do not always align with its realities.

Theoretical Foundations of Civic Agriculture

In shaping his concept of civic agriculture, Thomas Lyson explicitly drew from the perspectives of Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Polanyi. Tocqueville lauded the value of associations for combating individualism and bolstering U.S. society (1840/2003). He was not referring specifically to civic agriculture sites, but such sites may nevertheless welcome volunteers and seek to serve the public interest.

For his part, Polanyi asserted that the pursuit of profits in largely free market economies needed to be, and often was, counterbalanced by compassion for a country's people and land. In the context of civic agriculture, efforts to address food insecurity represent the counterbalancing that Polanyi highlighted.³ CSAs, for example, sometimes give away leftover food to organizations or provide vouchers for low-income individuals (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006; Woods, Ernst, Ernst, & Wright, 2009; Woods, Ernst, & Tropp, 2017). Below, I expound upon these theoretical perspectives and connect them to civic agriculture and volunteering.

Alexis de Tocqueville. According to Tocqueville (1840/2003), U.S. democracy in the 1830s reflected different social conditions than in France. While French aristocrats

³ The qualitative findings in this paper do not rely on a precise definition of food insecurity. Nonetheless, the term typically includes both physical (e.g., skipped meals, hunger) and psychological (e.g., worry) dimensions (Bickel, Nord, Price, Hamilton, & Cook, 2000).

exercised supreme authority over the people, the United States empowered its citizens to express themselves and develop their own identities. Tocqueville also argued that the U.S. was marked by growing individualism—that is, “a calm and considered feeling which persuade[d] each citizen to cut himself off from his fellows and to withdraw into the circle of his family and friends” (p. 587). Tocqueville theorized that unfettered individualism would produce self-centeredness and result in the decline of the country (Tocqueville, 1840/2003). Thus, he proposed that counterbalances were needed to prevent this decline from occurring.

Fortunately, in the view of Tocqueville (1840/2003), these counterbalances to individualism existed. Public associations comprised one of the best examples of this.⁴ While the government could perform crucial functions, public associations engendered voluntary cooperation and discourse. At their finest, they created more informed and caring citizens:

The only way opinions and ideas can be renewed, hearts enlarged, and human minds developed is through the reciprocal influence of men upon each other. I have shown how these influences are practically non-existent in democratic countries. Thus, they have to be created artificially, which is what associations alone can achieve. (Tocqueville, 1840/2003, p. 598)

Though he wrote nearly two centuries ago, Tocqueville’s work remains relevant to studies of civic agriculture. The women farmers interviewed by Trauger et al. (2010) fostered community by transforming their farms into meeting spaces (e.g., for farm camps) and offering educational programs. Analogously, a farm in Ontario, Canada facilitated social relationships by hosting a music festival, workshops, and other social events (Sumner, Mair, & Nelson, 2010). Despite these examples, an important question

⁴ Newspapers and religion were other examples delineated by Tocqueville (1840/2003).

remains: To what extent can volunteering at farms unite diverse groups of people and nurture a sense of community?

Karl Polanyi. Civic agriculture is likewise indebted to Karl Polanyi for his theoretical contributions (Lyson, 2004). In his book, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Polanyi (1957/2001) dismissed the notion of a free, natural, self-regulating market that functioned for the betterment of society. By treating land, labor, and money as commodities, the market economy attempted to become “disembedded” from social relations.⁵ Free market principles, therefore, promoted conflict, apathy, and instability. People scrambled to gain an economic advantage, even if at the expense of other people or their own social standing. If left unchallenged, the free market “would result in the demolition of society [and]...human beings would die from the effects of social exposure” (Polanyi (1957/2001, p. 76).

Yet, people in the U.S. mounted opposition before this disembedding could be fully realized. Stated differently, they attempted to transcend the drive for profits and reintroduce social concerns into the economy. The reforms of the New Deal were examples of this reintroduction, as they “offered striking proof, both positive and negative...that social protection was the accompaniment of a supposedly self-regulating market” (Polanyi, 1957/2001, p. 211).

The transcendence of social concerns over profits is a goal of civic agriculture (Lyson, 2005). Ideally, civic agriculture sites prioritize mutually supportive relationships among farmers, consumers, and community members. They may also endeavor to

⁵ Polanyi dismissed this treatment of land, labor, and money as the “commodity fiction” (p. 76).

address local issues such as food insecurity (Anderson & Burau, 2015; Guthman et al., 2006).

Critiques of Civic Agriculture

So far, I have primarily addressed the theoretical foundations and potential benefits of civic agriculture. I now turn my attention to two critiques that may apply to civic agriculture and volunteering, as well as to broader facets of food systems. The central question—which I later address using data from three farms in Maryland—is as follows: Do the everyday practices of civic agriculture reflect Lyson’s (2004) ideals?

Critique #1: A lack of community. Although the terms civic agriculture and community supported agriculture imply substantial involvement by customers and community members (e.g., volunteers), community building is usually low on the priority lists of customers at CSA programs. Receiving fresh and tasty food is typically deemed more important than active engagement (Durrenberger, 2002; Oberholtzer, 2004; Pole & Gray, 2013). Similarly, Pole and Gray (2013) conducted a survey with customers of CSA programs in New York; only about one-third of respondents agreed that they were a part of their CSA program’s community.

The lacking sense of community among CSA customers does not necessarily mean that civic agriculture efforts are always devoid of socialization. Interviews with gardeners and staff members in New York revealed that community gardens served as gathering spaces and also helped to preserve cultural heritage (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004). Further, sub-groups of people may form smaller communities. The one-third of respondents in Pole and Gray’s (2013) study who felt connected to a community may represent a minority of customers, but the proportion is noteworthy nonetheless;

some customers may have desired and pursued community more than others. Farmers may also practice civic agriculture in an effort to socialize with customers (Migliore, Caracciolo, Lombardi, Schifani, & Cembalo, 2014). Finally, while DeLind (1999) bemoaned customers' unwillingness to assist with work at her CSA program, customers still "would stand in the gardens and talk, often for an hour at a time" (p. 6). In this paper, I explore social interactions among agricultural volunteers.

Critique #2: Inability to address food insecurity. In Polanyian terms, civic agriculture can resist the market's movement toward "disembeddedness" (Polanyi, 1957/2001). Programs to increase food access represent one strategy of resistance (Guthman et al., 2006; Trauger et al., 2010). However, as Hinrichs (2000) wrote about CSA programs, civic agriculture may also adhere to market principles—with economic viability as the chief imperative for farmers: "Farmers know...what is necessary to cover their costs, pay themselves a living wage, and also make the capital improvements that will ensure the farm can survive over the long term" (p. 300). Hinrich's (2000) observation also challenges civic agriculture's Tocquevillian foundations. Civic agriculture sites can be non-profits that embrace community building and address social concerns (e.g., food insecurity; Dimitri, Oberholtzer, and Pressman, 2016). Yet, unlike most public associations, farms generally produce and sell commodities.

In addition, statistics suggest that civic agriculture alone is not going to solve food insecurity. The problem is too prevalent, and farmers' own financial situations are too precarious. In 2016, the median income for operators of low- and medium-sized farms was only \$428 (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service and

National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2016; Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013);⁶ these operators depended on off-farm income to subsist. That same year, the prevalence of household food insecurity in the United States was approximately 12% (Coleman-Jenson, Rabbit, Gregory, & Singh, 2017).

Furthermore, Guthman and collaborators (2006) conducted surveys and interviews with managers of civic agriculture sites. Approximately 87% of farmers' markets and 83% of CSA programs indicated that they employed one or more strategies to provide food to individuals with low incomes. Farmers' markets most commonly accepted government entitlements (e.g., the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP]), whereas 61% of CSA programs practiced food recovery (e.g., donating leftover food).

Yet, in interviews, many managers said that barriers prevented them from doing more to confront food insecurity. One such barrier was the low income of farmers (Guthman et al., 2006). Moreover, Pilgeram (2011) reported that the farmers she interviewed endeavored to farm sustainably. Some farmers tried to make their food accessible to low-income individuals, but financial realities made this difficult. As one interviewee told Pilgeram (2011), "the only thing that isn't sustainable about sustainable farming is the farmer" (p.390).

Besides the aforementioned challenges, another unsettled issue relates to whether the government or the voluntary and private sectors (e.g., volunteers, farmers) should be responsible for addressing food insecurity. Poppendieck (1998) conducted research with

⁶ This amount (\$428) was only for farms with less than \$250,000 in sales (Hoppe & MacDonald, 2013). The median income for large-scale farms (\$143,968) was higher (USDA ERS & NASS, 2016). Moreover, the mean income is more than the median—\$8,201 compared to \$428. Finally, the off-farm income for households of low- and medium-sized farms were \$55,000, on average (USDA ERS & NASS, 2016).

emergency food programs that relied heavily upon volunteers. While Poppendieck respected volunteers' efforts, she asserted that the programs were ultimately problematic. They created an illusion of progress with regard to reducing hunger; they masked systemic inequalities; and they absolved the government of the responsibility to address the root causes of food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1998). An analogous critique could be applied to civic agriculture sites that donate produce to emergency food programs.

Definitions of Community

Importantly, Lyson (2004) did not provide a precise definition of community, but he nevertheless alluded to potential characteristics. Communities may be marked by learning, be locally oriented, reflect a common purpose, be about more than profits, and “foster social cohesion and neighborliness” (Lyson, 2004, p. 24).⁷ Tocqueville (1840/2003) similarly asserted that public associations could bring people together to achieve shared goals and combat individualism.

In the broader academic literature, there is no consensus about how to define a community. Still, some scholars have sought to identify the dimensions. Doolittle and MacDonald (1978) performed a factor analysis of data from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The authors discovered six factors associated with people's sense of community: “supportive climate,” “family life cycle,” “safety,” “informal interaction,” “neighborly integration,” and “localism” (Doolittle and MacDonald, 1978). The first factor, “supportive climate,” included knowing people in the neighborhood and duration of residence. Based on another analysis, McMillan and Chavis (1986) divided sense of community into four

⁷ Lyson's (2004) reference to “social cohesion and neighborliness” was specifically about community gardens (p. 24).

categories: “membership,” “influence,” “integration and fulfillment of needs,” and “shared emotional connection.”

Thus, despite the lack of agreement, there are common elements across definitions—including social interactions, meaningful connections, stability, pursuit of mutual goals, and a connection to place (see also, Chavis et al., 1986; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). While maintaining a focus on the perspectives of Tocqueville (1840/2003) and Lyson (2004), I explore the myriad dimensions of community in this paper.

The Critiques, Agricultural Volunteering, and the Volunteer Process Model

To summarize, there are two valuable critiques of civic agriculture: (1) community building often is not the priority (DeLind, 1999), and (2) civic agriculture sites cannot—and perhaps should not—address food insecurity (Guthman et al., 2006; Poppendieck, 1998). Still, there is variation within and across farms, and, as such, the critiques warrant further exploration.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) explore the critiques’ relevance for agricultural volunteering in Maryland and (2), in the discussion section, consider the perspectives of Tocqueville and Polanyi vis-à-vis these critiques. Non-wage labor on farms has recently received a growing amount of attention from researchers (see e.g., Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015; Miller and Mair, 2015). However, the body of research remains small, and additional studies on the topic are merited. According to Ekers and colleagues (2015), there is a particular need for in-depth qualitative studies that investigate the boundaries and potentials of non-wage labor on farms.

To address this need, I conducted a case study of agricultural volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland. Snyder and Omoto's (2008) Volunteer Process Model informed the original research questions, the guides for the interviews and participant observation, and the qualitative codebook. The model posits that volunteering involves three interrelated processes—that is, antecedents, experiences, and consequences—which operate at four levels: individual volunteers, interpersonal, organizational, and societal (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). The research was exploratory, and I did not specifically set out to study the two critiques. Nevertheless, the findings emerged organically.

Methods

I conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews at an urban community farm (City Farm), a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm), and a faith-based, volunteer-run farm (Faith Farm). The three farms are non-profits with community-focused missions. Thus, they can be considered civic agriculture sites. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board reviewed the research and designated it as exempt.

Research Setting: Three Non-Profit Farms in Maryland

City Farm. City Farm has two distinct locations in Baltimore City. One location is inside a city park, bordered by a high school, a cemetery, and railroad tracks. More than two-thirds of the census tract is African-American, and the median household income is higher than for the city overall (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). The second location, by contrast, is more residential. It is lined by city streets and a number of residences—though the city has demolished several rowhomes in recent years. The residential location is in a predominately black census tract; over 95% of the population

is African-American. The census tract's median household income is less than Baltimore City's.

City Farm is part of a larger community-based organization in Baltimore City. The farm strives to educate and engage community members, increase food access in Baltimore City, provide professional development opportunities, and care for the environment. Thus, its mission reflects the values of civic agriculture (Lyson, 2004). In addition to selling food via multiple marketing channels (e.g., a mobile market, a farmers' market), City Farm's offerings include community events, workshops, field trips, and a composting program.

The farm largely determines the schedule for volunteering. During the growing season, each location invites people to volunteer for three hours on a weekday. These hours are discontinued at the residential location for the wintertime. Some weekend volunteer opportunities are also available throughout the year. Advanced notice is only required for groups with five or more individuals. Otherwise, volunteers simply arrive, sign-in, and, if necessary, sign a liability waiver.

Therapy Farm. Therapy Farm is situated inside a park that is near Baltimore City. The farm's mission is to provide a therapeutic, health-promoting environment for everyone. One way the farm pursues this mission is by offering horticultural therapy—that is, individual and group activities for people with physical and psychological disabilities (e.g., military veterans). For instance, an individual might be given a special tool to plant seeds and improve their manual dexterity. The farm has also added an emphasis on education. In 2017, a new program for beginning farmers began, with a special focus on military veterans.

Both flowers and food crops grow at Therapy Farm. The marketing channels include a CSA program, a farmers' market, restaurants, and stores. The farm also hosts and participates in community events.

Compared to City Farm, the process for prospective repeat volunteers at Therapy Farm is lengthier, as paperwork (e.g., a liability waiver) and a background check must be completed. Yet, once finished, volunteers may determine their own schedules; the farm just requests advanced notice if any scheduling changes arise.

Faith Farm. The faith-based mission of Faith Farm is to grow and donate food, serve and give credit to Jesus, provide leadership opportunities, and unite diverse groups of people to socialize and share God's love. Except for two subcontract positions, the farm is run by volunteers. All of the food grown is donated to organizations, volunteers, and people in need. In 2016, the amount was almost 1.7 million pounds.

Faith Farm's more than 200 acres of fields are not located in Baltimore City; rather, they are in less populated areas in Maryland. The main crops are potatoes, corn, and beans, but the farm grows other items as well. Machines assist with much of the labor.

Between June and November, casual volunteers come to the farm to help with harvesting. These volunteers are often affiliated with groups (e.g., churches). Moreover, 10 to 15 individuals serve as core volunteers—that is, de facto staff members. They operate and maintain the heavy machinery, oversee the casual volunteers, and do most of the planting. They also help throughout the year.

Data Collection: Participant Observation

Between April 2016 and November 2017, I performed over 190 hours of participant observation. Approximately four of those hours were spent at three farm events—two events at City Farm and one at Therapy Farm. The remaining hours involved me volunteering at the farms and subsequently recording field notes. The approximate totals were 76.75 hours from 27 observations at City Farm, 88.5 hours from 25 observations at Therapy Farm, and 24.5 hours from seven observations at Faith Farm.

To write field notes, I used a semi-structured observation guide that had multiple parts. In the most prominent structured section, I wrote the estimated number of volunteers at the farm. The unstructured sections included a description of the tasks, if needed; impressions of volunteers' demographics; other information about volunteering; information about general farm operations; and personal reflections. The reflections addressed my own emotions, thoughts, and physical condition (e.g., soreness from volunteering). I also identified possible biases and emerging findings. Excluding the words on the observation guide, the average length of the field notes was over 1,100 words.

The participant observation conferred at least four benefits. First, it enabled me to identify, build rapport with, and recruit volunteers to be interviewed. For example, I interviewed three first-time volunteers; such individuals might have been inaccessible without the participant observation. Second, it enhanced my ability to tailor interview questions to specific farms and interviewees. Next, I was able to acquire data about my own experiences. Finally, rather than relying on what people said, the participant

observation yielded nuanced information about what volunteers actually did at the three farms (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted 19 interviews about volunteering—16 with volunteers and three with farm leaders. The breakdown of interviews by farm was as follows: nine volunteers and two farm leaders from City Farm, five volunteers and one farm leader from Therapy Farm, and two volunteers from Faith Farm. I recruited volunteers using a combination of convenience and maximum variation sampling. Gender, age, race, experience volunteering at the farm, and group affiliations were among the characteristics for which I sought diversity. I also employed a mix of active and passive recruitment. In two instances, the opportunity to be interviewed was announced to entire volunteer groups. These announcements resulted in two interviews from City Farm and four interviews from Therapy Farm. Otherwise, I actively recruited volunteers and farm leaders.

Interviewees completed a short demographic questionnaire. To protect farm leaders' confidentiality, only the demographics of the 16 volunteers are presented here. An open-ended question asked interviewees to write their self-described race or ethnicity. As shown in Table 3.2, nine responses included "White" or "Caucasian." Four other answers were "Middle Eastern," "Asian", "American," and "American Black." The sample was disproportionately young, as 10 interviewees were between 18 and 24 years of age. Nine participants identified as female. Thus, my efforts to recruit a diverse sample produced mixed results. Interviewees had a range of volunteer experiences, but African-Americans and older adults were underrepresented.

I conducted interviews in English and audio recorded them. Then, a professional transcription service transcribed the recordings. On average, interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. All interviewees provided verbal consent and were offered \$20 in compensation for their time. I used separate interview guides for volunteers and farm leaders, but both guides covered similar topics. Specifically, they addressed the antecedents, experiences, and consequences of volunteering (Synder & Omoto, 2008). The interviews were semi-structured. I posed follow-up questions and also tailored some questions to particular interviewees. For instance, I asked volunteers from City Farm about the residential location's efforts to engage community members.

Unlike the participant observation, which focused on behaviors, the interviews mainly elicited volunteers' and farm leaders' stated perceptions. Volunteers articulated the reasons they decided to volunteer, and farm leaders voiced the rationale for hosting volunteers. These data about perceptions would not have been as easily attainable via participant observation alone.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from the interviews and participant observation using a combined inductive and deductive approach (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). This combination allowed the Volunteer Process Model to remain a vital component of the research, while also enabling unexpected findings to emerge (see Figure 3.2; Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Moreover, it was appropriate for me to be the only coder, as I immersed myself in the three farms and was at the forefront of all phases of the research—design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Janesick, 2003).

The coding had multiple steps (see Figure 3.3). To begin, I deductively organized the codebook according to the Volunteer Process Model. Antecedents, Experiences, and Consequences, therefore, were the broadest codes, and underneath each of them were the four levels delineated by Snyder and Omoto (2008): Individual, Interpersonal, Farm, and Community-Society. Subsequently, I read the first 13 transcripts and 51 field notes and created a preliminary coding hierarchy. This hierarchy consisted of the names of more specific sub-codes underneath the aforementioned broader codes; however, I did not create definitions during this step. I discussed and amended the hierarchy with my advisor.

Once the hierarchy was established, I transformed it into an initial codebook with code names and definitions. I primarily developed the sub-codes inductively. Nonetheless, a small number of sub-codes (e.g., Staff recommendations for improvement) were created a priori in anticipation of the interviews with farm leaders, which had not yet occurred.

Throughout the coding process, I revised the codebook three different times—at the beginning, after the first 13 transcripts and 51 field notes were coded, and at the end. When all coding was completed, I identified relevant codes and extracted data to use for this paper. Finally, I highlighted exemplary quotations.

Results

Below, I present results that correspond to the two critiques. The findings showed that volunteering at the three farms did not fully reflect the ideals of civic agriculture. Nevertheless, farm leaders appeared to recognize potential challenges regarding community building and food provision, and they also sought to maximize opportunities.

Moreover, as evidenced by the horticultural therapy at Therapy Farm, the farms sometimes pursued other goals.

Critique #1: A Lack of Community

The evidence regarding community building was mixed. The substantive conversations among volunteers and staff members, the social connections formed, the interactions with neighbors and passersby, and the sense of a common purpose mostly affirmed civic agriculture's principles. However, at least three facets of volunteers' experiences detracted from the sense of community: high volunteer and staff turnover, the distant origins of a number of volunteers, and the solitariness of some tasks.

Conversations among volunteers and staff members. In my field notes, I regularly described conversations at the farms as "substantive" and "pleasant." One Thursday at Therapy Farm, a staff member and I discussed topics such as "my research, politics, social services, and large-scale farms and crop rotations" (Field notes, October 2016). At City Farm, the subjects of conversation one Saturday "included the Baltimore Orioles; the Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Texas; school gardens, school lunches, and the educational system writ large; and human development programs in Baltimore City" (Field notes, October 2016). Furthermore, at Faith Farm, I spoke with a core volunteer about academia, abortion, and fishing.

As the examples above illustrate, deep conversations commonly occurred at the farms. Among other weighty discussion topics were end-of-life issues, housing policies, the effects of warfare, government corruption, and racial segregation in cities. Still, the dialogue was sometimes lighthearted too. One volunteer joked with me about the

meaning of my first name—that is, “lover of horses” (Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm).

The data above emerged from the participant observation. Hence, I was the research instrument, and my personal distaste for superficiality likely influenced the topics of conversation. Nevertheless, even when my contribution was minimal, the subjects of discussion were substantive. For instance, a week before the U.S. presidential election, I overheard a group at Therapy Farm mention Donald Trump. Additionally, in interviews, farm leaders emphasized the value of staff members’ friendliness: “I think we are a great staff.... I hate to say because we’re a farm we’re down-to-earth, but it’s true” (Dana, Farm Leader, Therapy Farm).

Connections and friendships. During the research, I did not spend much time outside of the farms with volunteers or staff members. Yet, on one occasion, “I was invited to have dinner at someone’s house” (Field notes, October 2016, Therapy Farm). Additionally, I attended a community event at City Farm. The farm set up stations, including “a plant station, where people could get free starter plants”—a strawberry shortcake station, and a lemonade station (Field notes, June 2017). I wrote about being tired and unenthusiastic when I arrived but feeling better once I encountered some repeat volunteers that I had previously met through volunteering. According to my field notes, “the group increased the fun and [my] comfort level dramatically.”

Interviewees also spoke about connections and friendships that they formed via volunteering. Walter, a repeat small group volunteer at City Farm, discovered that his wife’s church and a staff member’s church had partnered to start a garden. Another repeat volunteer stated that she and a staff member were “kind of friends” and the relationship

made “the volunteering...a lot more meaningful and fun and interesting—to be able to work with the same people all the time and get that aspect of it” (Vera, repeat group volunteer, City Farm).

Bennie helped to initiate a partnership among his organization, Baltimore City Government, and Faith Farm. The partnership—which I explicate later in this paper—brought children from the city to the farm. Bennie knew the core volunteers well and talked glowingly about the friendship: “Hardworking men, all day. Men that really love each other...and they say man, the love of God, ‘I love you, man,’ and [you] know that they’re on the same path that you are on.”

Finally, volunteering offered the opportunity for groups to strengthen internal bonds. Jon was a member of a university group that regularly volunteered at Therapy Farm. Despite not necessarily expecting to form friendships, Jon eventually gained an appreciation for the social facets of volunteering with his group:

I love the combination of being in that setting, doing those things, and talking with this group that I go do these things every week with. I...have become friendly with these people and I really like them...So yes, just that whole combination of things, the people that I’m volunteering with...the setting that I’m with them in makes it a pretty positive social space...I feel the gardening makes us happy to be with each other and vice versa: us happy to be with each other makes the gardening pleasurable.

— Jon, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Neighbors and Passersby. The residential location of City Farm was the only farm site in a busy area. During weekday volunteer hours, staff members often performed cooking demonstrations and sold food from the mobile market. The site also offered free garden plots to individuals that lived nearby. Still, people did not only visit the farm for these offerings; rather, they sometimes just stopped while traveling. One day, as I was filling buckets to water the community garden plots, “a community member came by and

asked me if it was well water or pipe/city water...In addition, there were at least three or four other people who came by [the farm]" (Field notes, October 2016, City Farm).

Interviewees also noted that cars paused and peered at the farm activities: "I've seen people driving past and they're just staring at us and looking and [wondering], 'What's going on here?'" (Beverly, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm).

Although many of the passersby at City Farm's residential location did not volunteer, there were exceptions. The site ran a workshare program, whereby people could receive food in exchange for volunteer hours. In 2017, the value of three volunteer hours increased from \$10 to \$30, and workshare membership tripled within half a year. Several workshare members lived near the site and volunteered repeatedly. Further, after I signed in one day, two children arrived; a staff member telephoned the parents for approval; and the children weed whacked and mowed the fields.

The park location of City Farm was still in Baltimore City but not directly next to residences. Instead, the site was neighbored by a school. According to a farm leader, students from nearby schools engaged with the farm:

We have, in any given year like I said, between 20 and 50 high school youth...who are coming out here and volunteering their time as well. [The park] site isn't in a community at all...If we have any community, it's the school system. I think we do actually have a lot of people from that community coming out and becoming involved.

— Taylor, farm leader, City Farm

As an example of involvement, high school students grew crops in City Farm's educational hoop house each year. Then, they cooked and donated the food to a local organization. Besides the school students and individuals familiar with the farm (e.g., people donating compost), passersby rarely stopped at City Farm's park location.

Therapy Farm sometimes attracted visitors from the park. Such visitors purchased items, toured the farm, or just walked around. Nonetheless, the site offered a “country environment” (Dana, farm leader, Therapy Farm); it was not next to homes or a school.

Finally, Faith Farm was less than 25 miles from Baltimore City, but the surroundings were more rural than the other two farms’. Though fewer people passed the farm, I recorded one memorable moment: “A woman came by, and the farm gave her two bags of turnips, which she intended to share. She was incredibly touched and grateful... [She], a regular volunteer, and I prayed together, and we gave her hugs” (Field notes, November 2016, Faith Farm). Organizations (e.g., churches) could also go to Faith Farm to receive food.

Common purpose. Although there were apparent exceptions—as well as assorted motivations for volunteering—most volunteers seemed to share a desire to meaningfully help themselves and other people (e.g., the farms, surrounding communities). According to Jon, the unity within his volunteer group at Therapy Farm could lead to broader impacts on himself and society. His words resembled those of Tocqueville (1840/2003):

Any opportunity to form community, to form connections within a group around a passion that you collectively share is actually really powerful work. Even if you don't necessarily see the ripple-out effects instantly...I just think that that work needs to be done so much more in our society, which is way too individualistic and isolating a lot of the time.

— Jon, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

My own reflections also addressed the subject of unity. The community-based organization that ran City Farm hosted a large volunteer event for its projects across the city—including one at the farm’s park location. Roughly 30 volunteers mulched pathways and planted trees and flower bulbs. We then conversed and ate pizza, as it lightly rained. Afterward, I wrote the following:

*The weather was beautiful; the tasks were agreeable; the conversations were pleasant; and—most of all—there was a sense of optimism and satisfaction that arose from working side-by-side with individuals of all ages, genders, professions, and (to a lesser extent) races.*⁸

— Personal reflections, October 2016, City Farm

Volunteer and staff turnover. The substantive conversations, friendships formed, and interactions with neighbors elevated the cohesion at the three civic agriculture sites. However, the sense of community was dampened by high volunteer and staff turnover. A fraction of volunteers contributed consistently to the farms, but many people volunteered only a few times. This was especially the case at City Farm and Faith Farm. At the former, corporate groups often just volunteered once. City’s Farm’s predetermined, open volunteer hours also facilitated one-time volunteering. According to Taylor, even the “standout exceptions” tended to volunteer for a limited amount of time:

We don’t usually keep the same regular volunteers for longer than a year or so, and I don’t know if just the break of the wintertime is partly responsible for that or if people don’t feel like the tasks they’re given are evolving or what exactly it is, but we do seem to have that pattern. There does seem to be a cap on how much volunteering at City Farm someone wants to do before they don’t want to do it anymore.

— Taylor, farm leader, City Farm

First-time and occasional volunteers regularly visited Faith Farm, too. The sporadic nature of volunteering was not necessarily viewed as undesirable. One volunteer, Esther, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to interact with numerous individuals: “It’s not a one and done kind of situation, which is normally what I’m used to. But this is a lot of people going in and out, and it’s new people every time, which is really cool” (Repeat solo volunteer, Faith Farm). Interviewees made similar comments

⁸ As discussed in Chapter 6, the volunteers at City Farm were racially diverse overall. On this day, however, most volunteers appeared to be white.

about City Farm, with one volunteer proclaiming that she “definitely met a lot of interesting people” (Crystal, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm). Another person said there was “someone different” every time she volunteered (Vera, repeat group volunteer, City Farm). Still, although interviewees and I valued the opportunity to converse with new people, volunteers’ transience hindered the ability to form long-term relationships.

Therapy Farm possessed a unique social dynamic. Unless a person purposely visited when other volunteers were present—as I did on multiple occasions—many of volunteers’ interactions were with staff members who worked regular hours. This dynamic, therefore, facilitated the development of deeper relationships. Yet, relationships were also constrained by staff turnover. Between August and October of 2016, four staff members either left or took a decreased role with the farm. To describe my feelings about this, I wrote words and phrases such as “draining,” “I will genuinely miss them,” and “their absence was conspicuous.” Fortunately, my connections to other staff members buffered the impacts of the turnover:

Even though the sporadic presence of volunteers makes social interactions a little different at Therapy Farm, they certainly are not unpleasant. I am feeling more and more connected to the staff members with whom I have worked and talked for multiple months now. I selfishly wish there wasn’t as much turnover, but a few staff members still remain, and they make the turnover much more tolerable.

— Personal reflections, October 2016, City Farm

City Farm also experienced substantial staff turnover—particularly among AmeriCorps members who typically applied, served their term, and then left.⁹ The impacts of this turnover on volunteers was less noticeable than at Therapy Farm, as City Farm’s volunteers more commonly interacted with each other, rather than with staff

⁹ As explained to me during the participant observation, the AmeriCorps program considers its members to be engaged in service; they are not deemed employees. Nevertheless, the AmeriCorps members at City Farm worked consistent hours, assumed supervisory roles, and behaved as staff members.

members. But on one Saturday, “the transition period from the old AmeriCorps people to the new AmeriCorps people appear[ed] to be somewhat problematic” (Field notes, September 2016, City Farm). The farm was understaffed, which created challenges with managing volunteers. For instance, when the volunteer group arrived, the lone staff member was on the other side of the farm, and I felt compelled to greet the group myself.

Based on my seven observations and the two interviews, there was not much turnover among the core volunteers at Faith Farm. Most of them were older men who retired from other careers and then decided to give their time to the farm.¹⁰ Only one core volunteer had previous experience with farming. Further, some casual volunteers’ participation spanned multiple years: “[A core volunteer] was saying that he sees people come back every year that started small. Now they come back as counselors... They bring kids back... So they’re growing [up] on the farm” (Bennie, repeat volunteer). Thus, despite the one-time involvement of many casual volunteers, there were groups and individuals that volunteered over the long term.

Distant origins of volunteers. As explicated above, the three farms attracted neighbors and passersby from the surrounding communities. Some volunteers also traveled short distances. Yet, other volunteers commuted from faraway places. The origins of Faith Farm’s volunteer groups included Baltimore City; Central Pennsylvania; and the suburbs of Washington, D.C. A majority of City Farm’s volunteers appeared to come from Baltimore City, but a small number traveled from places like Towson and the D.C. area.¹¹

¹⁰ While the core volunteers tended to be older, a small number of them were relatively young. One, for example, was under 18 and “did nearly everything around the farm” (Field notes, July 2017, Faith Farm).

¹¹ According to one farm leader interviewee, City Farm prioritized volunteers from Baltimore City—many of whom were people of color. As such, the recruitment process likely influenced volunteers’ origins.

The distant origins of some volunteers did not noticeably diminish the social interactions at the farms. Substantive and wide-ranging conversations occurred regardless. Still, the distance posed a challenge for volunteers such as Ivette, who came to participate in horticultural therapy but described Therapy Farm as a “far, far away place” from her (Repeat solo volunteer). She later referred to the drive as “horrible.” More pertinent to notions of community, Lionel stated that living a distance away from City Farm impeded his ability to socialize outside of volunteer hours:

I've met people and I friended the people, and it's good. It's good meeting with people here around, but I also don't live in an area where if a lot of people that lived in the [farm] community came and helped out that I would be able to frequently come up and hang out with them or anything like that. It's good to talk to people at the farm, and then I go home.

— Lionel, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm

Solitary tasks. While socializing often accompanied volunteering, the farms also offered spaces for solitary, hands-on activities. At City Farm’s residential location, another volunteer and I weed whacked and mowed the fields. We periodically communicated with each other, but the social interactions were minimal. I reflected that the tasks were “exhausting but thoroughly enjoyable” (Personal reflections, November 2016, City Farm). Moreover, when asked about the differences between volunteering at the farms versus other places, some interviewees highlighted the unique social environments. Crystal referred to her volunteering at a medical institution as “more directly people oriented” than volunteering at City Farm (repeat solo volunteer); Vera appreciated having the choice to “not talk to other people” at the farm (repeat group volunteer, City Farm); and Miranda said she normally volunteered alongside a limited number of people at Therapy Farm, whereas “she was constantly interacting with other people” at a food shelf (repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm).

Interviewees did not depict the farms' comparatively calmer social environments as troubling. Rather, they valued being outside, obtaining exercise, relieving stress, and performing tasks. Andres' words reflected this sentiment:

I don't know what it is, but I just breathe more [at Therapy Farm]. I'm just more open. It's just acres. I'm just there just like I'm just relaxing. At some of the other volunteer places, it's like we're doing work, hard work. It's just I'm breathing but it's not like I'm thinking, and I don't have time to talk and just slow down on some of the stuff. At Therapy Farm, it's like I go on a pace, and I'm busy, and I feel comfortable with everything.

— Repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Even so, the solitariness of some tasks complicated notions of community.

Volunteering at the farms offered the opportunity to socialize with people from different backgrounds—including staff members, passersby, and other staff members. Most volunteers also appeared to share a common purpose. Yet, a portion of the work was done either alone or in small groups.

Critique #2: Inability to Combat Food Insecurity

A second critique of civic agriculture is that the financial precarity of agriculture inhibits farmers' ability to adequately address food insecurity (Guthman et al., 2006; Pilgeram, 2011). Poppendieck (1998) also questioned whether the voluntary sector—that is, non-profits that rely on volunteers and donations—should be responsible for tackling the problem. In this section, I examine this critique using data from the three farms. Increasing food access was an explicit mission of City Farm and Faith Farm, while Therapy Farm's educational programming planned to place beginning farmers in areas of need.¹² Based on the data, the critique appears merited. However, directly providing food was not the farms' singular focus.

¹² These areas have often been termed food deserts, but, in 2018, Baltimore City renamed them “healthy food priority areas” (Misiaszek, Buzogany, & Freishtat, 2018).

Strategies for enhancing food security. City Farm endeavored to enhance food access at least four ways. First, the mobile market brought produce to areas with inadequate access to healthy foods. People with limited mobility could also request a home delivery. Prior to 2017, the market was a modified truck that made stops in the farm’s region of Baltimore City. However, another vehicle was added in 2017, thereby expanding the market’s reach. The mobile market accepted government benefits (e.g., SNAP) and also matched benefit purchases up to \$10—a program known as “Double Dollars.”

Second, after the amount was increased, the workshare program gifted \$30 worth of food vouchers in exchange for three hours of volunteering. When I interviewed Taylor in June 2017, approximately 40 people had signed up for the workshare, and they were collectively receiving \$50 to \$100 worth of food each week. Third, City Farm donated between 5% and 10% of food to organizations—specifically “afterschool programs that [did] meal preparation with the students as well as network of halfway houses on the Westside that [did] a lot of cooking with their residents” (Taylor, farm leader, City Farm). Finally, in 2017, City Farm partnered with a local church to provide “30 CSA shares—20 for their [church] members and 10 as sponsorships for people in need” (Field notes, May 2017).

Faith Farm attempted to address food insecurity by growing food and donating it to individuals and organizations. Most of the harvest went to food banks in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Yet, in 2016, a major recipient deemed some potatoes unacceptable, so the farm found another option: sending thousands of pounds of potatoes to help flood victims

in West Virginia and North Carolina.¹³ That year, the farm grew and donated 1.7 million pounds of food.

Faith Farm also welcomed smaller organizations (e.g., churches) to come to the farm and pick up food. One weekend, volunteers gathered in a field and harvested approximately 55,000 pounds of potatoes. A portion of the potatoes were loaded into 75-pound bags and then placed on a pickup truck, with Baltimore City as the destination. On a Thursday, members of the Boy Scouts harvested crops (e.g., zucchini, peppers): “The group was planning on giving the food away at a major event on [that] Saturday” (Field notes, July 2017, Faith Farm).

The partnership between Bennie’s organization, Faith Farm, and Baltimore City also exemplified Faith Farm’s efforts to directly engage community groups. Once per week—for about 16 weeks over the summer—Baltimore City Government transported a group of children and adult chaperones from the city to the farm. Upon the group’s arrival, the core volunteers provided an overview of the farm, gave instructions about the day’s task, and prayed with everyone. Then, the group went out to a field “for an hour or two, harvesting whatever [was] in season” (Bennie, repeat volunteer). After having lunch, seeing the chickens and cows, and going for a walk, the group returned to Baltimore City and gave away the food. On one occasion, the group “took back two full bins of zucchinis and a bin of corn” (Field notes, July 2017, Faith Farm).¹⁴

Moreover, though not a significant enhancer of food security, Faith Farm offered free food to all volunteers. We harvested 20 bins of turnips one morning: “The

¹³ According to a farm document, the unacceptability was due to issues with dirt and dust.

¹⁴ These bins were not small. After volunteering one morning, I wrote that “we harvested 30 bins of cabbages, which amounted to 22,000 pounds” (Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm).

[volunteer] group was invited to take home turnips with them, and some of the people did not hold back. It was pretty amusing” (Field notes, November 2016). As mentioned previously, the farm also gave food to passersby.

Therapy Farm’s primary goal was providing horticultural therapy to people of all ages and abilities (e.g., military veterans, school groups). A farm leader, Dana, described the therapy as follows:

What we do is we provide therapy using plants...The idea is that...we can develop muscle strengths, we can help with movement, mobility, self-esteem issues, all that mental health, physical health, interpersonal relations, reintegration back into society—plants can do that...An example would be working with a stroke survivor that once had movement in their arm, maybe they don’t have that ability anymore. But [we] would use the plants as a means of them to try to extend their arm to reach a pot.

During the research, Therapy Farm added an educational emphasis, which seemed to be embedded within the volunteering, farm workshops, and horticultural therapy. Further, the farm developed a program for people who wanted to become farmers. The class incorporated horticultural therapy and taught participants about agriculture. 2017 was the pilot year, and “there were only five participants”; but the farm was “hoping for 20 participants in February [of 2018]” (Field notes, November 2017, Therapy Farm event). Importantly, at the end of the program, participants were going to receive plots of land in areas with low access to healthy foods. Thus, while Therapy Farm’s focus was not on food insecurity, the farm recognized the issue.

Direct role of volunteering. Volunteering directly impacted food access via two paths: (1) the production and distribution of food at Faith Farm and (2) the provision of food to volunteers. Aside from the subcontract positions, Faith Farm was run entirely by volunteers. Even the core volunteers were unpaid. One lightheartedly “said that the pay

was terrible, but the benefit package was great” (Field notes, November 2016, Faith Farm). Thus, volunteering was responsible for the 1.7 million pounds of food produced and given away in 2016. At City Farm, by contrast, volunteers did not appear to boost the quantity of food produced; rather, volunteers contributed most to other parts of the farm’s mission (see Chapter 5): “If we didn’t have volunteers, production would be the same...but I walk around the farm, and I see so many things that wouldn’t exist if we didn’t have volunteer groups—like a pollinator garden...a sign...a rain garden” (Ariel, farm leader, City Farm).

Secondly, volunteering offered the means to simultaneously engage community members and provide them with food. The workshare program and cooking demonstrations comprised the best examples from City Farm. I wrote this about one demonstration and the corresponding activities:

A staff member...fed us a salad made with kale, ginger, cranberries, scallions, and vegetable oil. It was delicious! Some people even received seconds. One of the [adult] volunteers also threw a football around with the child volunteers. At various points, people bought items from the mobile market. I bought strawberries and—following the lead of another volunteer—shared them with the children.

— Field notes, May 2017, City Farm

As described earlier, Faith Farm provided a portion of the harvest to its volunteers. The volunteers from the Boy Scouts, the groups that Bennie helped to coordinate, and the groups (e.g., churches) from Baltimore City all received food and then took it back to their places of origin.

Indirect role of volunteering. There were two ways that volunteers indirectly helped to bolster food access: (1) being a meaningful source of funding and (2) enabling staff members to focus more on programs. Regarding the former, the farms kept track of

the number of volunteers for grant writing and marketing purposes. Some volunteers or organizations also donated to the farms, thereby increasing the farms' ability to invest in programs (see Chapter 5).

Additionally, volunteers enabled staff members to focus more on programs that provided food (e.g., the mobile market). For example, Lionel explained that, as a volunteer, his hands-on involvement with City Farm's education and outreach programs was minimal. Yet, in his view, volunteers still made an indirect impact:

Lionel: As far as making a difference to the community, I myself am just a little piece way in the backburner, and the ones who really make difference are the ones going out and selling it right in the program, and selling produce to things like the SNAP and Double Dollar that they do, and the education outreach...

PRM: You think the volunteers help out with that in some sort of way?

Lionel: I think that without the volunteers, the program would be much harder to run because we [volunteers] do quite a bit in our short time that we spend out here in a month. We do quite a bit that the regular workers aren't able to get to during the week and that maybe they don't have enough people to do something so labor intensive, and some of the things are on a larger scale than I'd expect two people to be able to do. When you get in 20 people out here, it's a great help to the farm and then it influences the impact that they are able to have and the farm is able to have on the community.

Dana, the leader from Therapy Farm, similarly commented that volunteers' contributions always helped the horticultural therapy either directly or indirectly. This indirect assistance presumably extended to the program for beginning farmers.

Other focuses besides food access. The farms openly communicated about their desire to increase food access. During farm tours, the staff members from City Farm mentioned programs such as the mobile market. At Faith Farm, the core volunteers wore

t-shirts with a Bible passage: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat” (Matthew, 25: 35, New International Version).

Still, increasing food access was not the exclusive goal of the farms. The cooking demonstrations at City Farm’s residential location provided food, but, perhaps more importantly, they also attracted nearby community members and fostered a social atmosphere; community engagement was central to the mission of City Farm. Moreover, City Farm donated a percentage of the harvest to halfway houses and afterschool programs in Baltimore City. These smaller programs were deliberately selected because the 20,000 pounds of food produced annually was not enough “to put a major dent in larger programs,” and the farm wanted to “at least ensure there [was] an educational component” (Field notes, November 2016, City Farm). Also, in summer 2017, the farm was planning to have a pumpkin patch and a corn maze ready for the fall. City Farm’s desire to provide education and engage nearby community members, therefore, existed alongside the wish to enhance food access.

The observations and interviews at Faith Farm revealed the perceived importance of harvesting and donating food. Esther told me that the farm brought “a lot of people together...and help[ed] a lot of people” (repeat solo volunteer, Faith Farm). When I asked Esther about whether hunger should simply be prevented rather than addressed through emergency food programs, she expressed sympathy for the ideal but viewed it as impractical: “There’s a lot of ways for people to just fly under the radar and get kind of left behind. So, it would be nice to prevent hunger first, but it’s not really realistic” (repeat solo volunteer, Faith Farm). Volunteers’ actions also conveyed a devotion to

addressing food insecurity. After volunteering one day, I observed that “the volunteers worked rather relentlessly” (Field notes, September 2016, Faith Farm).

Nonetheless, Faith Farm also endeavored to facilitate socializing among people from diverse backgrounds. The groups coordinated by Bennie and Baltimore City Government harvested for about 90 minutes, on average, but they also devoted time to praying, eating lunch, receiving an overview of the farm, seeing the animals, and going for a walk. During a stroll through the apple orchard, “a core volunteer even gave one of the kids an exoskeleton of a cicada, and s/he and another kid were enthusiastic about that” (Field notes, July 2017, Faith Farm). Further, Faith Farm donated pumpkins to schools for use in the fall; the pumpkins were “often grown and donated more as a goodwill gesture rather than for eating” (Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm).

Discussion

Farms and Community

Community and civic agriculture literature. The results of my research neither wholly affirm nor refute the critique that civic agriculture ironically lacks community. Rather, the results suggest that the social environments for volunteers at civic agriculture sites are complex, dynamic, and varied. Conversations can be substantive; deeper relationships may be formed; volunteers can share a common purpose; and interactions with passersby may occur. DeLind (1999) criticized customers’ unwillingness to help at her CSA program, but a majority of the volunteers I observed appeared eager to contribute.

Yet, there are also potential impediments to community building among volunteers. With few exceptions (e.g., the core volunteers at Faith Farm), the staff

members and volunteers at the three farms experienced turnover. Thus, unlike McIvor and Hale (2015)—who studied urban agriculture in Denver Colorado and concluded it could “facilitate opportunities for enduring relationships”—I found that agricultural volunteers infrequently forged lasting connections (p. 734).¹⁵ Moreover, volunteers sometimes traveled from distant locations, which limited the ability to socialize outside of the farms. Finally, farming tasks were occasionally done alone. Interviewees and I did not perceive the solitariness as necessarily problematic, but it nevertheless raised questions about community building.

Broader literature about community. There is a lack of agreement about how to define the concept of community or whether such a definition is even attainable. Nevertheless, a study in Italy examined people’s perceptions of communities and their levels of civic and political engagement (e.g., volunteering). The study authors then identified five clusters: “shared community,” “affective community,” “ordinary community,” “participatory community,” and “organized community” (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). These clusters had similarities, but they also possessed unique attributes.

The findings from my research were similar, as there were differences within and across farms. For example, the residential location of City Farm endeavored to attract volunteers and passersby from nearby residences. Hence, the approach to community seemed to more place-based. Mannarini and Fedi (2009) referred to this as “ordinary community” or “organized community”—whereby a sense of community was formed locally through everyday practices (p. 219). By contrast, the social bonding described by Jon from Therapy Farm was more characteristic of a “shared community,” which

¹⁵ In discussing relationships, McIvor and Hale (2015) did not explicitly reference volunteers. Rather, they mentioned a long-term partnership between a non-profit farm and a school.

encompassed “the idea of interacting [with] people who share[d] common objectives and ideals” (p. 217). At Faith Farm, volunteers commonly commuted from faraway locations, but the commitment to socializing and providing food was reflective of a “participatory community” (Mannarini and Fedi, p. 218).

Furthermore, some studies have found a positive relationship between sense of community and length of residence (Chavis, Hogge, McMillen, & Wandersman, 1986; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974). This association suggests that personal stability can lead to wider feelings of connectedness. In my research, stability—or a lack thereof—also appeared to influence the social environments at the farms. A subset of individuals had long-term commitments to the farms, thereby increasing the likelihood of forging friendships. Still, the ephemeral involvement of many volunteers limited the ability to create social ties. Much like short-term residents (e.g., renters) can have little incentive or ability to connect with their neighbors, the sense of community at farms can be stifled by volunteers’ sporadic or finite participation (Chavis et al., 1986; McCabe, 2013). Janowitz (1952) termed this a “community of limited liability,” whereby individuals’ membership or withdrawal depended on the fulfillment of personal needs and goals.

Practical implications for farm communities. The findings in this paper represent reasons for optimism about the future of civic agriculture. The conversations resembled the conversations described by community gardeners in St. Louis (Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005); they were substantive and far-ranging.

Even the exploration of hindrances to community building revealed ways to enhance social opportunities. For example, the workshare program at City Farm simultaneously attracted people who lived nearby and facilitated repeat volunteering (i.e.,

reduced volunteer turnover). City Farm donated the food that was distributed via the workshare program. Thus, these programs may not be financially viable for every non-profit farm. Still, workshare programs warrant consideration for non-profit farms that support civic agriculture's ideals and are well-resourced

Partnerships between the farms and organizations likewise highlighted social possibilities. The collaboration between Faith Farm, Baltimore City Government, and Bennie's organization not only impacted the children who came to the farm; it also resulted in friendships between Bennie and the core volunteers. Similarly, Jon's university group at Therapy Farm volunteered consistently, which enabled the group members to bond with each other. Non-profit farms should continue to partner with organizations (e.g., universities) to promote volunteering and community building.

Tocqueville, community, and other perspectives. According to Tocqueville (1840/2003), "if [Americans] failed to acquire the practice of association in their day-to-day lives, civilization itself would be in danger" (p. 597). Thus, he construed volunteering as means to build community and counter excessive individualism. My research largely supports Tocqueville's conclusions. In addition to producing food, the farms served as places to socialize with volunteers, staff members, and passersby. However, changes to U.S. society have occurred since Tocqueville's time. Such changes may at least partially account for two of the impediments to the community building—that is, turnover and the distant origins of volunteers.

Since the 1970s, the annual rate of volunteering in the United States has remained relatively stable. Yet, due to demographic changes (e.g., more women in the workforce), the nature of volunteering has shifted (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006). Rather than

investing numerous hours in organizations, younger volunteers tend help more sporadically; older adults comprise the only demographic that volunteers more consistently than before (Chambré & Netting, 2016; Anderson et al., 2006).¹⁶ As explained above, my findings are congruent with these trends. Most of the core volunteers at Faith Farm were older retirees, and they functioned as de facto staff members. Still, many volunteers came to the farms only a small number of times. When Tocqueville traveled to the U.S. in the 1830s, this volunteer turnover was not as common.

The United States has also become more transient. Compared to the mid-1900s—and, even more strikingly, to Tocqueville’s time—people now own more automobiles, work farther away from home, and are more likely to live in suburbs (American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials, 2015). These changes do not mean that travel distance is irrelevant to present-day volunteering in the U.S. Lee and Won (2011) studied volunteering among college students at a southeastern US university. They found that travel distance was the second-most important influencer of volunteering, with the first-most being organizations’ missions (Lee & Won, 2011). By attracting passersby and volunteers from nearby locations, the residential location of City Farm evidenced this influence. Even so, many volunteers commuted from farther away. Tocqueville likely did not foresee such long-distance travel.

Notably, the research highlighted a false dichotomy between public and private efforts. Akin to how the United States Postal Service buttressed voluntary associations during the 1800s—a point that Tocqueville (1840/2003) did not acknowledge—government entities also contributed to the farms (Skocpol, 1997). The AmeriCorps

¹⁶ There has been some disagreement about whether older adults volunteer more hours due to flexible schedules or generational differences (see e.g., Putnam, 1995; Rotolo & Wilson, 2004).

program is part of the federal government's Corporation for National and Community Service (n.d.); Baltimore City Government partnered with Bennie's organization and Faith Farm; and the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938) permitted the non-profit farms to host unpaid volunteers. Therefore, the government had a greater impact on volunteering and community building than Tocqueville might have anticipated.

To summarize, Tocqueville's observations about public associations formed a valuable foundation for Lyson's (2004) conception of civic agriculture. The former individual lauded the ability of public associations to bring people "of all ages, conditions, and all dispositions" together to achieve innumerable goals (Tocqueville, 1840/2003, p. 596). The latter scholar espoused civic agriculture as one of those goals to accomplish (Lyson, 2004). Based on my study, civic agriculture sites can unite people and promote community building. They may inspire substantive conversations, facilitate social bonding, connect volunteers and staff members to passersby, and reflect a common purpose.

Yet, the critique that civic agriculture lacks community also has merit (DeLind, 1999; Pole & Gray, 2013). The relationships formed by volunteers are often short-lived and confined to the farms. Taken together, the results suggest that a sense of community at farms should be viewed as neither fully present nor nonexistent. Instead, a sense of community is evident in some ways but not others; it is dynamic, changing across time and with societal trends; and it falls along an indefinite continuum. Future research and scholarship about civic agriculture should not only examine whether or not community formation is occurring; they should also acknowledge and seek to disentangle the multifarious and contested meanings of community.

Farms and Food Insecurity

Civic agriculture and food insecurity. The results are also consistent with existing research that recognizes civic agriculture’s ability to provide low-cost food but also questions the prospects of eliminating food insecurity (Guthman et al., 2006; Pilgeram, 2011). City Farm appeared to be cognizant of its limitations, as the farm purposely donated to smaller programs in an effort to provide both food and education; the 20,000 pounds of food grown per year were simply not enough to meaningfully impact larger organizations. As a point of comparison, the Maryland Food Bank (2018) distributes over 100,000 meals per day.

Similarly, Therapy Farm endeavored to tackle food insecurity through its beginning farmers program. However, the farm placed a greater emphasis on the horticultural therapy, which was a justifiable focus given the large number of people in the United States with physical and psychological disabilities (Kraus, 2017).¹⁷ The growing and selling of inedible flowers also underscored Therapy Farm’s unique mission.

As Faith Farm was run almost entirely by volunteers—and with the help of donations (e.g., land)—its substantial output of produce was noteworthy. Numerous people can be fed with 1.7 million pounds of food, and this point should not be trivialized. Still, the amount is dwarfed by the approximately 430 billion pounds that were available to U.S. consumers and retailers in 2010 (Buzby, Wells, & Hyman, 2014).¹⁸

¹⁷ According to Kraus (2017), 12.6% of people in the United States had a disability in 2016. The 2015 rates for cognitive and ambulatory disabilities were 4.8% and 6.6%, respectively.

¹⁸ The website for Feeding America (2018), a major network of U.S. food banks and distribution programs, states that network members supplied over 3.6 billion meals in 2017. This is a national statistic—not just for Maryland—but it nevertheless it underscores the massive need for free and affordable food in the United States.

Practical implications for combating food insecurity. The farms' limitations notwithstanding, the findings reveal possible ways to grow and distribute food to people in need. Faith Farm's innovative, volunteer-led model of food provision is especially intriguing. Most of the core volunteers retired from non-farming professions and then decided to devote a portion of their retirement to the farm. While this model may or may not be scalable to other settings and individuals, it highlights the potential productivity of retirees for civic agriculture. As Chambré and Netting (2016) argue, "care must be taken in recognizing there is great diversity in this group of aging citizens," but retirees nonetheless volunteer for more hours, on average (p. 13). My research illustrates that retirees can contribute to the goal of combating food insecurity.

Faith Farm's casual volunteers also harvested, received, and sometimes distributed food. This was exemplified by the Boy Scouts group, the smaller organizations (e.g., churches) from Baltimore City, and the groups of children organized by Baltimore City Government. Thus, just as partnerships between farms and organizations can facilitate community building, they can also help supply communities with food.

Likewise, City Farm's workshare program appeared to have dual purposes: attracting nearby residents and enhancing food access. Such programs may not always be feasible, and their effectiveness needs to be evaluated by future qualitative and quantitative studies (see e.g., Fullan, 2015; Gessner, Pataro, Tisdale, & Thiele, 2016). Even so, workshare programs warrant consideration from other farms.

Poppendieck's critique of nongovernmental approaches. I did not specifically set out to explore Poppendieck's critique of emergency food programs, nor did the results

resolve the question about whether farms, rather than the government, should endeavor to enhance food security. Forthcoming research should address this question in greater depth.

Nevertheless, an important finding emerged from my research. In addition to producing food, the three farms performed other functions, including educating people and facilitating socialization. The multifunctional nature of civic agriculture has been noted by other scholars (Poulsen et al., 2014; Poulsen, Neff, & Winch, 2017).

Tocqueville (1840/2003) also touted voluntary associations' greater ability than governments' to both achieve practical goals and counter individualism: "The moral wellbeing and intelligence of a democratic nation would be in no less danger than its business and industry if ever the government wholly took over the place of associations" (p.598). The preceding quotation stresses the intangible value of people uniting behind a cause.

Yet, continuing to have merit is Poppendieck's (1998) assertion that charity belies the imperative to tackle the root causes of poverty and hunger. While farms may provide food and simultaneously engage community members—often with the help of government programs such as SNAP and AmeriCorps—more policies should target the underlying determinants of food insecurity (e.g., low wages; Gunderson, Kreider, & Pepper, 2011). Chilton and Rose (2009), for instance, advocated an approach based on a human rights framework.

Polanyi and food insecurity. Volunteers' efforts at the farms were congruent with what Polanyi (1957/2001) described as "the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization" (p. 138). With

regard to food insecurity, the congruence was most conspicuous at Faith Farm. Still, City Farm confronted a range of perceived social issues, and Therapy Farm offered horticultural therapy to an important population—that is, people with disabilities. Volunteers’ motivations were myriad and not purely altruistic, but they, along with the staff members, nonetheless desired to perform meaningful tasks (see Chapter 6). The farms’ non-profit status also buttressed the community-focused missions.

The findings are largely harmonious with Polanyi’s perspectives, but questions remain. U.S. national politics has changed since the reforms of the New Deal and, in the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society—the latter of which ushered in Medicare and Medicaid as social protections (Levitan & Taggart, 1976-77).¹⁹ Politics has become more diffuse, with greater use the internet and an increased focus on more abstract topics (e.g., climate change; Bennet, 2012; Hestres, 2014); the U.S. Congress has become more polarized (Hill & Tausanovitch, 2015); and political power has become more concentrated, as wealthy individuals and corporations increasingly give hefty sums of money to campaigns (Hacker & Pierson, 2010). Although the 2010 passage of the Affordable Care Act expanded access to health care and signaled a lingering ability to enact socially protective policies, the potential of national legislation has seemingly weakened in recent years (Sommers, Gunja, Finegold, & Musco, 2015).

Despite the transformations of the federal government, the efforts of local policymakers and organizations remain robust, especially vis-à-vis food-related topics such as food insecurity. The proliferation of food policy councils evidences this

¹⁹ In this paper, I refer to the New Deal and Great Society reforms, as well as the 2010 Affordable Care Act, as examples of Polanyi’s (1957/2001) notion of “social protection” (p. 138). I do not mean to suggest that the policies were infallible.

robustness (Sussman & Bassarab, 2017). Moreover, the Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force met in 2009 and resulted in the hiring of a food policy director a year later (Santo, Yong, & Palmer, 2014). A major objective of the task force was to increase access to healthy foods in Baltimore City. People from both inside and outside of government contributed (Santo et al., 2014).

Thus, the resistance to the dehumanization produced by the free market continues, albeit in varied and imperfect forms. This resistance does not depend entirely on the U.S. Congress. As the findings from the three farms illustrate, civic agriculture's efforts to tackle food insecurity can be simultaneously governmental and nongovernmental, local and non-local; they can both adhere to free market principles and challenge them (McClintock, 2014); and they can reflect a synergy of multiple goals.

Strengths and Limitations

The research presented in this paper had at least three limitations. First, I conducted fewer interviews and observations at Faith Farm than at the other sites. The volunteering at Faith Farm tended to be more straightforward, and, as a result, I deemed the seven observations to be adequate. The two interviews also resembled the interviews from City Farm and Therapy Farm—covering subjects such stress relief, exercise, and socialization. Even so, given the uniqueness of Faith Farm, some pertinent topics (e.g., religion, charity) may have been underrepresented in the interviews. Second, I purposely selected multiple research sites in order to study the same phenomenon (i.e., volunteering) across different contexts (Yin, 2014). Yet, this decision necessitated a tradeoff: I yielded more diverse data but ceded the ability to concentrate on one location. Lastly, all of my observations occurred between the months of April and December. I

also asked farm leaders about the role of seasonality. Nevertheless, the park location of City Farm hosts volunteers year-round, and Therapy Farm's fields are in use every month except January. As such, I may have missed nuances about volunteering during the first three months of the year.

Though the research had limitations, it also possessed noteworthy strengths. First, the participant observation primarily yielded information about staff members' and volunteers' behaviors, whereas the interviews mainly addressed perceptions. Therefore, I employed methods triangulation (Patton, 1999). Second, farm leaders and volunteers shared similar but also unique perspectives in interviews. This incorporation of multiple viewpoints is known as data source triangulation (Patton, 1999). Finally, I was able to compare and contrast plentiful data from three distinct farms.

Conclusions

In sum, some scholars have questioned whether the practice of civic agriculture fulfills the ideals regarding community building and food security (Guthman et al., 2006; Pole & Gray, 2013). Using qualitative data about volunteering at three farms in Maryland, this paper concludes that the answers to these questions are not simple. As Tocqueville (1840/2003) might have predicted, the farms facilitated community building via conversations, social connections, and a sense of common purpose; however, geographic distance, high volunteer rates, and solitary tasks also limited the formation of community. Furthermore, the farms largely represented the social protectionism espoused by Polanyi (1957/2001), but the farms' contributions, however sizable, were not limited to the production and provision of food. Instead, the farms endeavored to impact society a variety of ways.

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CHAPTER 5: PAPER TWO

“It’s not going to be free labor”: The complex role of volunteering in achieving farms’ missions

Abstract

Since the early 1900s, the number of individuals working in U.S. agriculture has dwindled, and consumers have become more detached from the production of their food. The term civic agriculture describes efforts to reconnect people to farming, with an emphasis on the social, economic, and environmental needs of local communities. Civic agriculture is often enacted via direct-to-consumer marketing strategies, and farms can also host field trips, community events, and volunteers—the last of which is the focus of this paper. While researchers have increasingly given attention to agricultural volunteering, there remains a need to better understand agricultural volunteers’ experiences, as well as the ways that volunteers might advance or detract from farms’ missions. To address these gaps, I conducted approximately 190 hours of participant observation at three non-profit farms in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm), a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm), and a volunteer-run, faith-based farm (Faith Farm). I also interviewed 16 volunteers and three farm leaders. Findings revealed that volunteers had diverse experiences, with tasks differing within and across sites. The tasks depended on the characteristics of the farms; the trustworthiness, preferences, and abilities of the specific volunteers; and the capacity of staff members. Moreover, volunteers sometimes advanced farms’ missions by forming a critical mass for labor, being competent and dedicated, filling a need for labor, helping the farms financially, and being an inherent part of farms’ missions. Yet, potential challenges also existed.

Volunteers required supervision and scheduling, and they also could work slowly, make mistakes, or want to volunteer at inopportune times. The results suggest that volunteers' roles at farms are complex. Agricultural volunteering should not always be viewed as a one-sided relationship in which farms benefit from free labor. Rather, volunteering involves a mutual exchange between farms and volunteers, often with the ultimate goal of benefiting both parties and the wider community.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1900s, approximately two-fifths of U.S. workers were engaged in agriculture (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). A century later, the proportion was less than 2%. The decline can be attributed to many factors, including the growing industrialization of farming and increased migration to urban areas (Dimitri et al., 2005; United States Census Bureau, 1995). As a result of these changes, U.S. consumers have become more disconnected from food production; farm labor has been increasingly marginalized; and, in the view of some scholars, agriculture has become more harmful for the environment and human health (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2004; Shannon, Kim, McKenzie, & Lawrence, 2015).

Civic agriculture is a term that describes efforts to counterbalance the aforementioned harms (Lyson, 2000, 2004, 2005). In particular, civic agriculture emphasizes the social, environmental, and economic needs of local communities. Also, as the name suggests, it promotes relationships between farmers and consumers, thereby increasing the latter's awareness about their food. Civic agriculture is often carried out via direct-to-consumer marketing strategies such as farmers' markets and community

supported agriculture (CSA) programs. Farms can also host volunteers, community events, workshop, and field trips (Sumner, Mair, & Nelson, 2010).

Despite the potential of civic agriculture to improve communities, concerns have been raised about whether the treatment of workers is better than in industrial agriculture (Shreck, Getz, & Feenstra, 2006). For example, Margaret Gray (2013) conducted research with so-called family farms in New York's Hudson Valley. Not all of the farms were very small. They hired as many as 80 workers, and most of them reported gross sales between \$50,000 and \$250,000. Still, many of the farms sold products directly to consumers, were entrenched in the Hudson Valley, and were smaller than large-scale, industrialized farms (Gray, 2013). According to Gray, the farm operators faced constant financial pressures and, as such, they sometimes underpaid and overworked the hired workers. None of the workers received paid sick days.

More directly related to this paper, an online survey with a subset of farms in Ontario, Canada revealed that many farms depended on non-wage labor—that is, apprentices, interns, and volunteers (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015). This dependence was most pronounced at smaller, less profitable farms. In a follow-up article, Ekers and Levkoe (2016) argued that the need for nonwage labor largely arose from historical changes in the agricultural workforce. Farms could no longer rely on the free labor of family members, so they recruited nonwage workers instead (Ekers & Levkoe, 2016).¹

¹ Lobao and Meyer (2001) did not refer directly to non-family forms of unpaid agricultural work (e.g., volunteering). Still, they summarized research on the agricultural transition in the U.S.—defined as “the abandonment of farming as a household livelihood strategy” (p. 104).

Beyond the existing literature on agricultural labor, some research from other settings has considered the differences and similarities between volunteers' and staff members' roles. Volunteers may substitute for paid staff, but they also can have more supplementary roles, performing tasks that are consequential but require fewer skills or are unessential (Handy, Mook, & Quarter, 2008). The relationship between volunteers and paid staff depends on factors such as size of organization, type of organization, number of full-time employees, and liability considerations (Chum, Mook, Handy, Schugurensky, & Quarter, 2013; Handy et al., 2008). However, to reemphasize, these studies have not focused on volunteering at farms.

In this paper, I attempt to expand the aforementioned literature about agricultural labor, civic agriculture, and the role of volunteers in helping organizations. Specifically, I draw from a case study of three non-profit farms in Maryland in order to address the following aims: (1) describe the scope of tasks that volunteers may perform at three distinct farms in and around Baltimore, Maryland; and (2) explore the ways that volunteers can contribute to or detract from farms' missions. First, though, I introduce more literature and provide theoretical context for the paper.

Background

Wage Labor at Farms

The number of paid farmworkers in the United States is difficult to determine, as national surveys employ dissimilar methods and, consequently, yield different calculations (Kandel, 2008). Nevertheless, according to the Farm Labor Survey (FLS), the quarterly average for 2017 was approximately 731,000 workers (United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service [USDA NASS],

2017). This average excluded contract workers that were not paid directly by the farm operators. Thus, when accounting for this exclusion, a reasonable estimate for the number of paid farmworkers in the U.S. is around one million (Kandel, 2008; USDA NASS, 2006).² In October 2017, farm operators paid their non-contract field workers an average of \$12.83 per hour (USDA NASS, 2017). Nearly half of field workers are undocumented, making them more vulnerable to abuse (e.g., underpayment) and less likely to file complaints (Gray, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Hernandez, Gabbard, & Carroll, 2016).

Agricultural exceptionalism. U.S. agriculture has a long history of using underpaid labor (Farhang & Katznelson, 2005; Mize, 2006). This underpayment has not necessarily occurred illegally. Rather, policymakers have enacted laws to create unfavorable labor conditions for farmworkers—a practice termed “agricultural exceptionalism” (Rodman et al., 2016). The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which was first passed in 1938, sets the federal minimum wage and overtime requirements for all employees in the United States. However, with regard to the minimum wage, the FLSA explicitly exempts these categories of workers: agricultural workers at farms with few employees (i.e., no more than 500 “man days” of labor per calendar quarter); immediate family members of the farm operator; workers mainly involved with livestock production; and certain workers who have been historically paid per piece and meet other criteria. A “man day” is counted when an employee works for an hour or more on a given day. The FLSA also excludes agricultural workers from overtime protections.

Importantly, a majority of states have passed minimum wage and overtime protections

² The number (i.e., 731,000) does not fully reflect the presence of seasonal workers on farms; it is just a quarterly average. If, for example, a farmworker labors for the first two quarters of a year and another farmworker labors for the year’s last two quarters, the Farm Labor Survey averages this out to one person. Yet, two different people actually worked on farms during that timeframe (see Kandel, 2008).

that are stricter than those in the FLSA. Nevertheless, the federal minimum wage exemptions still apply to 11 states, one of which is Maryland (Rodman et al., 2016).

An implication of FLSA minimum wage exemptions is that a small number of for-profit farms can technically have volunteers if they do not violate the man-day requirement. Yet, the law regards volunteers in these circumstances as unpaid employees. Perhaps more importantly, the FLSA generally permits non-profits and government agencies to have volunteers.³ Thus, the three non-profit farms that I studied were in compliance with the law.

Non-Wage Labor on Farms

Based on data from the Census of Agriculture, over two million unpaid workers labored on farms in 2012 (USDA NASS, 2014). The figure for Maryland was 13,659. These numbers primarily reflect the contributions of family members (Kandel, 2008). Still, as explained below, the importance of other forms of non-wage work has received a growing amount of attention among researchers.

Interns, apprentices, and volunteers. From the previously mentioned survey of farms in Ontario, Ekers and colleagues (2015) found that smaller farms were more likely to report a dependency on interns, apprentices, and volunteers. Farms also indicated that non-wage workers learned about farming and posed challenges for farms, as such workers tended to be less skilled and less reliable. Despite this noteworthy study, the authors concluded that there remained a distinct need to “provide a more socially and spatially textured account of emergent forms of non-waged work” (Ekers et al., 2015, p. 718).

³ An exception relates to paid employees; they cannot volunteer to do the tasks that they regularly perform.

An earlier study in Washington State assessed the impacts of 50 gleaners—that is, volunteers that went to farms and harvested crops that would otherwise be left unused (Hoisington, Butkus, Garrett, & Beerman, 2001). In just four weeks, the gleaners amassed 110,000 pounds of food, and they donated approximately three-fourths of the total to community organizations. Volunteers, therefore, may fill a need for labor at farms, but they can also contribute to their communities.

WWOOF. A number of studies have examined non-wage labor in the context of WWOOF, also known as Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms. WWOOF facilitates agreements between organic farms and individuals (i.e., WWOOFers), whereby work—often in a distant location—is exchanged for room and board (WWOOF, 2016). Prevailing definitions of volunteering emphasize sacrificial giving by volunteers, and, as such, WWOOF and volunteering are not necessarily synonymous (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996). The former exchange is supposed to be approximately equal. Nevertheless, like volunteering, WWOOF relies on nonwage labor, and research on the subject can also be germane to volunteering. For example, Miller and Mair (2015) identified six intangible rewards for WWOOFers, which they termed “horizons of understanding” (p. 69). These rewards included not only learning about farming, but also connecting to nature and to other people.⁴

WWOOF agreements also help farms meet labor needs. One qualitative study in the Carolinas found that WWOOF farms’ reasons for hosting WWOOFers were both social and economic in nature (Terry, 2014). The farmers felt that WWOOFers provided

⁴ The other perceived benefits were experiencing life’s possibilities, being motivated to become politically active, and growing personally. Miller and Mair (2015) referred to these benefits as “reconnecting,” “consciousness-raising experiences,” and “transforming” (p. 73).

emotional and social support—that is, gave the farmers a greater sense of purpose—but the farmers also expressed a need for cheap labor. Similarly, interviews with Hawaiian WWOOF farms revealed that lifestyle motivations existed alongside concerns about economic viability; farmers wanted to promote an organic lifestyle, but they also desired WWOOFers’ help (Mostafanezhad, Suryanata, Azizi, & Milne, 2016). Thus, while WWOOF farms often espouse deeper values, economic realities also can drive them to recruit nonwage labor and reduce labor costs.

Missions of Civic Agriculture Sites

As a term coined by the sociologist Thomas Lyson (2000), civic agriculture is an abstract concept. A perfect, singular form of civic agriculture does not exist in reality. Nevertheless, some farms aspire to bolster their local communities. Dimitri, Oberholtzer, and Pressman (2016) analyzed data from a survey that included 315 urban and peri-urban farms. Approximately one-third of the farms were non-profits, and two-thirds indicated that they had a community-oriented mission, as opposed to a market-oriented mission. Among those that were community-oriented, 42% focused mainly on building community (e.g., offering job training), 38% emphasized education, and 20% prioritized the enhancement of food security. Therefore, some farms have missions beyond earning profits, and additional research needs to examine the various ways these missions can be pursued. In this paper, I explore volunteering as one possible means.

Theoretical Perspective

In their book titled *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson—writing as J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006)—presented at least three arguments about economics that had pertinence to agricultural volunteering. First, they asserted that

people's livelihoods are constrained by wider political and economic forces. Farms, for instance, may welcome volunteers not merely as an act of goodwill but also to satisfy labor needs and respond to wider changes in the agricultural workforce (Ekers et al., 2015; Ekers & Levkoe, 2016).

Second, people are already engaged in myriad productive activities beyond working and being paid wages by a for-profit business. Some individuals are paid in-kind with food and housing, as in the case of WWOOF. Others care for family members or freely volunteer their time helping organizations. From this vantage point, agricultural volunteering may be construed as a way to be active outside of the formal wage economy.

Finally, Gibson and Graham presented their vision of a "community economy," in which the pursuit of local community development embraced the ways wage labor and nonwage labor could combine to meet social and environmental needs. Thus, this vision aligns with Lyson's concept of civic agriculture (Lyson, 2004)

Conceptual Framework

To create a conceptual framework for this research, I adapted Snyder and Omoto's (2008) Volunteer Process Model, which delineates three interrelated processes of volunteering: antecedents, experiences, and consequences. These processes act on the individual, interpersonal, organizational {e.g., farm}, and community levels. In this paper, I focus primarily on farms' and volunteers' experiences—that is, the tasks that are assigned to and performed by volunteers—as well as the consequences of volunteering for farms and communities.⁵

⁵ The next Chapter, Chapter 6, addresses the antecedents and consequences of volunteering for volunteers.

Specific Aims

The two aims of this paper are as follows: (1) describe the scope of tasks that volunteers may perform at three distinct farms in and around Baltimore, Maryland; and (2) explore the ways that volunteers can contribute to or detract from the achievement of farms' missions. By addressing these aims, I hope not only to better understand the implications of using volunteer labor at farm; I also aim to highlight ways volunteers can advance the aspirations of civic agriculture.

Methods

I performed approximately 190 hours of participant observation at three non-profit farms in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm); a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm); and a volunteer-run, faith-based farm (Faith Farm). I purposively selected the sites to maximize diversity and explore how contrasting organizational structures and missions might influence experiences with volunteering. The names used in this paper are pseudonyms. I also conducted semi-structured interviews at the three sites—16 with volunteers and three with farm leaders. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board reviewed the research plan and designated the research as exempt.

Participant Observation

Between April 2016 and July 2017, I performed 59 observations as a volunteer, with the number of hours totaling about 190. Twenty-seven, twenty-five, and seven observations were done at City Farm, Therapy Farm, and Faith Farm, respectively. The time spent volunteering and observing at each location amounted to approximately 76.75 hours, 88.5 hours, and 24.5 hours. Although I spent less time at Faith Farm, the

experience for casual volunteers was more consistent than at the other two farms (see below). In addition to the aforementioned observations, I also attended and recorded notes for two community events related to City Farm, as well an event at Therapy Farm. The observations for these three events lasted four hours combined.

I recorded field notes after each day of volunteering at the farms. According to Gold's (1958) classification of fieldwork, I was a participant-as-observer. Participation took priority over observation; I did not conceal my status as a researcher; and I gradually developed relationships with staff members and other volunteers (Gold, 1958).

I recorded my field notes with the help of an observation guide. The guide was semi-structured—that is, mostly unstructured but with some more structured elements (see Figure 3.1). Section topics included types of volunteers, estimated number of volunteers, impressions of demographics, tasks that were performed, information about volunteering, information about farm operations, and personal reflections. The reflections were akin to what Van Maanen (2011) has termed a “confessional tale,” meaning they were comprised of my own feelings about volunteering, potential biases, and emerging thoughts related to the research. The field notes varied in length but were more than 1,100 words, on average, including 340 words of reflections but excluding the words already on the observation guide. Thus, while I did not endeavor to provide “thick description,” a wealth of data was collected (Geertz, 1973).

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the participant observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 people: nine volunteers and two farm leaders from City Farm, five volunteers and one farm leader from Therapy Farm; and two volunteers from Faith Farm. I recruited the

16 volunteers using a mix of convenience and maximum variation sampling. The goal was twofold: to capture a variety of perspectives and to interview people who had expressible, substantive perspectives about volunteering. The participant observation helped me identify and recruit volunteers. For example, recruiting the three first-time volunteers might have been impossible had I not been volunteering myself.

Four of the interviewees from Therapy Farm belonged to a college group with which I had consistently volunteered. I informed everyone in the group about the opportunity to participate, and four people expressed interest and were interviewed. In a similar instance at City Farm, I made an announcement about my research, and two people from the same group offered to participate. Otherwise, I identified and directly recruited individual volunteers to be interviewed. The three farm leaders who were interviewed held positions that involved meaningful interactions with or decisions about volunteers.

I used different interview guides for volunteers and farm leaders. Nevertheless, both guides were based on the Volunteer Process Model. They had questions about the reasons people volunteered, what the experience of volunteering was like, and what the perceived consequences of volunteering were (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Based largely on the participant observation, I also asked questions that were tailored to each site. The duration of the interviews ranged from 16 minutes to 52 minutes, with an average duration of approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English, audio recorded, and then transcribed by a professional transcription service. I offered interviewees \$20 in compensation for their time.

I also asked interviewees to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. Slightly more than half of the 16 volunteer interviewees indicated that they were female (n = 9) and between 18 and 24 years of age (n = 10, see Table 3.1). The question about race was open-ended, and it yielded an assortment of responses. Nevertheless, nine interviewees wrote that they identified as “White” or “Caucasian.” The questionnaire did not inquire about time spent volunteering, but most interviewees were repeat volunteers (n = 13). Due to the small number of research sites and corresponding concerns about confidentiality, farm leaders’ demographics are not reported in this paper.

Data Analysis

I analyzed field notes and interview transcripts using an integrated approach to coding—that is, via a combined inductive and deductive process (see Figure 3.3; Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). I started by deciding to deductively organize the codebook according to the Volunteer Process Model, with Antecedents, Experiences, and Consequences as the highest-level codes. Then, I read through all of the first 13 transcripts and 51 field notes. Based on this reading, I developed a preliminary coding hierarchy, with more specific sub-codes underneath the aforementioned high-level codes. I also included a high-level code for general farm operations. The hierarchy was discussed with my advisor and revised. Definitions were not a part of the hierarchy; the goal was only to establish the structure of the codebook. Subsequently, I developed, tested, and refined an initial codebook, which included code names and definitions. Most of the sub-codes, therefore, were created inductively.⁶

⁶ The exceptions pertained to farm leaders’ perspectives, as those interviews had not been conducted yet.

Throughout the coding process, and via the aid of memos, the codebook was revised two additional times (See Figure 3.3). After coding all 19 transcripts and 62 field notes, I extracted data to work with for this analysis. The data pertained to volunteers' role in achieving farms' missions. I also identified exemplary quotations. MAXQDA software assisted with the coding, particularly by allowing me to efficiently retrieve data and make comparisons across farms.

Research Setting

City Farm. The urban community farm has two different sites. The primary site is inside a public park and is not surrounded by homes. Instead, the site is adjacent to a school, a cemetery, and railroad tracks. The residential location, by contrast, is bordered by city streets, row homes, and businesses.

The mission of City Farm is to educate community members, enhance food access in Baltimore City, provide professional development opportunities, and care for the environment. The farm's marketing channels include a farmers' market, a mobile market, a community supported agriculture (CSA) program, and restaurants. City Farm also donates a portion (i.e., 5-10%) of the food grown to local organizations. In addition, the farm directs educational programming such as field trips and workshops.

During the growing season, the farm holds open volunteer hours on two weekdays and some Saturdays. City Farm asks volunteers to sign a liability waiver, but advanced notice is unnecessary except in the case of large groups. Weekday volunteer hours continue at the park location in the wintertime.

Therapy Farm. The therapeutic farm is situated on a scenic tract of land just outside of Baltimore and inside a park. Old barns are scattered across the site, along with

newer cold frames, a greenhouse, and an office building. Therapy Farm produces both flowers and food crops.

The primary mission of the site is to provide horticultural therapy to individuals and groups with developmental disabilities. Such groups are often comprised of young people or military veterans. Besides interacting with people in an attractive, outdoor environment, the horticultural therapy entails learning and using special tools to improve dexterity. Moreover, after I started my research, the farm added an emphasis on education. In conjunction with a local agency, Therapy Farm developed a course for aspiring farmers (e.g., military veterans). Therapy Farm sells their products a variety of ways, including through flower and vegetable CSAs, at a farmers' market, and to wholesalers and restaurants.

Prior to volunteering, prospective long-term volunteers are asked to undergo a background check and submit paperwork.⁷ This process takes a few days, but, when completed, volunteers are permitted to come to the farm any time to volunteer. Therapy Farm only requests that volunteers provide advanced notice about scheduling (e.g., cancelations).

Faith Farm. At the volunteer-run farm, more casual volunteers help with the harvesting during the growing season—that is, from June to November. Casual volunteers are frequently members of groups (e.g., churches, schools). In addition, a small number of core volunteers function as staff members. They maintain and operate the machinery, do the bulk of the planting, and guide and supervise other volunteers. In

⁷ One-time volunteers are not required to do this.

2016, the farm created two subcontract positions—one for marketing and one for high-skilled farm tasks. Yet, the vast majority of the farm labor remains unpaid.

Compared to City Farm and Therapy Farm, Faith Farm is located in a less populated area. Faith Farm's fields span more than 200 acres. Corn, potatoes, and beans are the three main crops, but the farm also grows tomatoes, turnips, cabbages, pumpkins, and other items.

The mission of Faith Farm is to collectively produce as much food as possible; donate the food to organizations (e.g., food banks, churches) and people in need; serve and give credit to Jesus; and provide opportunities for different people to socialize and demonstrate Jesus' love to one another. More than two million pounds of food were donated in 2015, while nearly 1.7 million pounds were given away in 2016.⁸

Results

Below, I present findings about the scope of volunteer tasks at the three farms, as well as the ways volunteers advance or hinder farms' missions. All participants' names are pseudonyms. Tasks were extremely diverse—varying not only across the three farms but within them. Moreover, volunteers sometimes furthered or were a part of farms' missions, but they also posed challenges for the farms.

Scope of Volunteer Tasks

City Farm. In my 27 observations at City Farm, volunteers often performed labor intensive tasks such as mulching, planting trees, and preparing plant beds (i.e., bed prep)—the latter of which was typically done when one crop was finished and another

⁸ According to a farm document, the slight decline in 2016 was largely the result of extreme weather—that is, above average precipitation in the spring and sweltering temperatures in August.

was about to be planted.⁹ On one occasion, approximately twenty volunteers and I helped to install a French drain at the primary site: “This involved digging a trench, placing the plastic drains in the ground, and covering them mostly with crushed stone but also sand....I primarily ended up shoveling the stone, but I did run the wheelbarrow a couple of times” (Field notes, November 2016, City Farm). Also, individual volunteers occasionally mowed the grass or used a weed whacker. This usage occurred more frequently at the residential location, where the proximity to the community heightened staff members’ concern for the farm’s appearance. As a farm leader explained, the residential location also tried to give greater autonomy to volunteers:

That seems like a pretty consistent regular group of people who are there [at the residential location] and...are able to work on what they want to. If they show up and they want to weed whack, then weed whack, or if they show up and they want to paint something, then they can paint something because that’s a space we especially want to turn over as much of as we can to the community.

— Taylor, farm leader, City Farm

City Farm infrequently assigned harvesting to volunteers. When harvesting was assigned, it seemed to be for one of two reasons: a plant bed needed to be cleared to make room for another crop; or trustworthy, long-term volunteers were present. On one occasion at the park location, a reliable, long-term volunteer and I calmly conversed and harvested carrots inside a hoop house while a first-time volunteer group mulched the orchard and cleared tall grasses outside. At the residential location, a university group had visited the farm consistently for several weeks and established a noticeable bond with the farm’s staff members. This bond was also reflected in the tasks the group performed, including periodic harvesting:

⁹ Bed preparation entailed one or more of the following: harvesting remaining crops; removing or laying down drip irrigation tape; adding soil amendments (e.g., feather meal, sulfur); removing weeds, grasses, and plants; rolling up the plastic mulch; aerating the soil; and raking the soil to form rows.

The volunteer group indicated that they had harvested peppers, okra, etc. before and were confident they could do it again. They had done an abundance of other work too, including...planting cabbage, harvesting figs, and painting/beautifying some of the 2 x 4's in the community garden area.

— Field notes, October 2016, City Farm

Nevertheless, a leader of the group, Vera, told me that there was variation in the trustworthiness of volunteers:

Harvesting figs—mainly just [another volunteer] and I do that...because [the other volunteer] and I are consistent, and then the rest of the people...may or may not come every week...so staff I guess gets some more experienced stuff, and then returning volunteers seem to get similar work to that; but less consistent volunteers seem to get the dirty work.

— Vera, repeat group volunteer, City Farm

This perspective about trustworthiness was echoed by a farm leader. After noting that one-time volunteer groups were given easier tasks for which the likelihood of counterproductive actions (e.g., stepping on crops) was low, Taylor said the following:

We don't need the highest trained people to be able to participate in more regular farm activities, but we do need people who are aware enough of where they are and what's going on around them. It takes a certain level of familiarity.

— Farm leader, City Farm

Therapy Farm. I conducted about 90 hours of participant observation at Therapy Farm. Volunteer activities were myriad and included harvesting, deadheading flowers, cutting flowers, planting, trellising, and weeding. In the paperwork submitted prior to volunteering, volunteers indicated their skills and task preferences. Then, staff members attempted to accommodate them. As a farm leader explained, volunteers did not always favor working in the fields: “Some people just don't want to work out in the farm, you know, but they want to do something to volunteer” (Dana, Farm Leader, Therapy Farm). Volunteers, for example, came in the early spring and started seeds in the greenhouse.

Decorating wreaths was a leisurely option in the wintertime. A small number of volunteers even assisted with administrative tasks (e.g., grant writing).

Compared to City Farm, Therapy Farm’s volunteers were more commonly allowed to harvest crops. A university group regularly volunteered at Therapy Farm, and, for multiple weeks, the group members harvested fish peppers. These peppers were then sold to a local upscale restaurant in Baltimore City. The group also performed tasks such as clearing plants from the fields:

It’s a lot of really whatever they [i.e., staff members] need... We’ve picked a lot of peppers—so many fresh peppers. I’ve never seen so many peppers in one place.... And then we plant sometimes, and we do a lot of clearings, getting crops that are done out of the way, or they have this big hoop house that got annihilated by a wind storm. So, we’re taking that apart and clearing that out. Catching chickens: that happens almost every week. Someone has to go catch chickens.

— Miranda, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Sometimes, the farm would allow the group to choose a task from a number of options:

There is some freedom. Yesterday, [the staff member] was like, “I need some people to weigh peppers, and some people will move the piles. Who would rather do that?” We were able to choose that way. Sometimes when we have a larger group, there is a choice [of tasks] within that.

— Carrie, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

During my time at Therapy Farm, I rarely observed or assisted with the horticultural therapy. Nonetheless, there was one exception—when a group of veterans and their caretakers visited the farm. The group was divided according to the veterans’ abilities and preferences, and I followed a staff member into the greenhouse:

The [veterans] seeded lettuce and arugula in trays. Then, they transplanted the roots of spider plants into smaller pots... Finally, they transplanted spider plants from a giant pot to a medium-sized pot... Throughout the time, I simply helped [the staff member]—gathering pots, bringing and providing soil, etc. It is important to note that there was a therapeutic component. One veteran was encouraged to use paper towels to give them a more comfortable handgrip. There was also a tool that was designed to be ergonomic for holding.

— Field notes, October 2016, Therapy Farm

Aside from my personal experience, I saw another long-term volunteer (i.e., Ivette) regularly assist with the horticultural therapy; however, there was almost always a paid staff member present. Thus, horticultural therapy was not completely off-limits to volunteers, but it was an uncommon and carefully supervised task. Only certain volunteers were permitted to assist.

Interestingly, the reverse was also true of some tasks; the farm preferred volunteers to do them:

Subsequently, I followed and chatted with a staff member as they sprayed neem oil on the flowers. At the behest of another staff member who referred to this as a volunteer task, I took over the spraying and did this for the remainder of the day.

— Field notes, August 2016, Therapy Farm

Therefore, Therapy Farm allowed volunteers to meaningfully contribute and engage in a variety of activities. Yet, there was also a concerted effort to utilize people's skills and minimize major errors. High-skilled, crucial tasks such as leading the horticultural therapy were principally done by staff members.

Faith Farm. I conducted seven observations spanning 24.5 hours at Faith Farm, and a pattern quickly emerged. Days started with an overview of the farm, a prayer, and instructions. Then, everyone harvested as much as possible, with slight variations depending on the crop.¹⁰ Each period of volunteering typically lasted approximately three hours. At the end, the core volunteers thanked everyone and said another prayer.

Despite the consistency, minor deviations in the pattern did occur. In one case, the volunteers finished harvesting turnips so rapidly that they started another task—removing

¹⁰ I wrote the following about harvesting cabbages: “There were three main steps: (1) some people used blades and went ahead and cut the cabbages; (2) people came behind and removed leaves; and (3) we threw the cabbages until they reached the trailer with the bins... We literally threw the cabbages as if they were softballs” (Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm).

plastic mulch from what had been a pepper field. Moreover, for 2017, Faith Farm partnered with Baltimore City Government and a community organization to bring groups of children to the farm. The children harvested crops and brought the food back to their communities. Yet, if time permitted, they also enjoyed lunch in the pavilion area, looked at the animals (i.e., cows and chickens), and took a walk around the farm.

To reemphasize, the core volunteers functioned as staff members. They coordinated and supervised volunteer groups, operated and maintained the heavy equipment, and stored and helped distribute the food. According to Esther, a repeat solo volunteer, the core volunteers enabled the casual volunteers to do more enjoyable tasks:

They [i.e., the core volunteers] work the machines and they do a lot more of the groundwork—kind of the stuff that people [i.e., the casual volunteers] don't want to do....So, they do the things like carrying the buckets through the fields and all that stuff that people don't really like.

Esther also surmised that the harvesting that occurred at Faith Farm—through substantial assistance from machinery and the core volunteers—was easier for the casual volunteers to perform than other tasks (e.g., planting):

I feel like that's more technical stuff that they have to make sure that they do right. And harvesting, it's kind of it's easy to understand and it's easy to do but doesn't have a lot of training. So, seeding and all of that might be messed up if more casual volunteers do that, so it's probably a good idea that they [i.e., the core volunteers] do that on their own.

Similarities and differences across farms. For each of the three farms, the tasks volunteers performed appeared to be contingent upon the mission, scales, products, and programs of the farms; the capacity of staff members; and the trustworthiness, preferences, and abilities of the volunteers. Labor intensive tasks such as mulching and planting trees were standard at City Farm, where, as farm leaders explained to me, fostering an enjoyable, holistic environment was important. Harvesting, though, was only

assigned when there was either a row that needed clearing or a trustworthy volunteer present. Vera, the group leader who harvested figs at City Farm, was an example of the latter. By comparison, harvesting by volunteers was common at Therapy Farm, and it was even more frequent at Faith Farm.

While horticultural therapy was central to Therapy Farm's mission, only a small number of volunteers directly assisted. Nevertheless, helping with therapy was not even an option at City Farm and Faith Farm because this was not part of their mission. As Ivette said to me in describing her motivations for volunteering at Therapy Farm, "there literally [wasn't] another horticultural therapy farm in the area" (repeat solo volunteer).

Finally, the capacity of staff members impacted the tasks done by volunteers at each of the farms. City Farm wanted volunteers to accomplish critical tasks related to infrastructure (e.g., mulching); Therapy Farm relied on volunteers for a variety of tasks; and Faith Farm depended on casual volunteers for harvesting during the growing season. Later in this paper, I expound upon the role of volunteers in filling a need for labor.

Advancing Farms' Missions

Volunteers could advance farms' missions in at least five ways: (1) forming a critical mass for labor, (2) being competent and dedicated, (3) filling a need for labor, (4) enhancing the financial well-being of the farms, and (5) being an inherent part of farms' missions.

Critical mass for labor. Due to their sheer size, large volunteer groups were able to accomplish a remarkable amount of work. At Faith Farm, this meant harvesting thousands of pounds of food. One Saturday morning, there were multiple volunteer groups and roughly 70 volunteers. Over the course of nearly three hours, volunteers

“harvested 63,600 pounds of potatoes, not including another 1,000 pounds or so in the bags” (Field notes, Faith Farm, October 2016). The core volunteers had arrived to the farm earlier and started to uncover the potatoes using a potato harvester. Still, the harvesting proceeded speedily, and the farm’s mission of donating food was furthered.

The value of a critical mass of labor was also apparent at an Arbor Day event at City Farm. In less than two hours, approximately 50 volunteers—about half of whom were students and teachers from a middle school—planted 25 American chestnut trees and two white oak trees. A farm leader, Ariel, told me that the chestnut trees were not going to provide food, but they were part of the holistic mission of the farm:

Ariel: *Like we put in a chestnut orchard. We didn’t need a chestnut orchard. We’re not going to get chestnuts from it probably but it’s really cool that we have one and we’re part of something bigger because we have that.*

Me: *Okay. What’s the value of things like a chestnut orchard or a rain garden...Is that part of the mission of City Farm or just something that...*

Ariel: *I mean, to me, those things contribute to a holistic farm environment. At least like an educational farm that seeks to be more than just making carrots and selling carrots. It serves as an ecologically benefitting organism. It’s helping the city be more beautiful and healthy. It helps with storm water issues that we have.*

Being competent and dedicated. Furthermore, skilled and dedicated volunteers were present and invaluable at all three farms. At City Farm and Therapy Farm, their importance was exemplified by the two aforementioned university groups. At Faith Farm, their significance was embodied by the core volunteers who functioned as staff members. Nevertheless, as I reflected in my field notes, even less frequent volunteers occasionally made a disproportionate contribution:

There was variation in productivity within the [church] group as well. Some worked more slowly, while one of the middle-school children—who was not

imposing in stature—tirelessly carried the full buckets around. He was clearly faster and more energetic than I was.

— Field notes, July 2017, Faith Farm

Filling a need for labor. The labor provided by volunteers was not without drawbacks. Nevertheless, the farms sometimes depended on volunteers to accomplish tasks. Therapy Farm, in particular, was open about the importance of volunteers to the farm and its mission. A banner read “Volunteers = Therapy Farm’s success,” and a farm leader also expressed an appreciation and need for the assistance of volunteers:

We rely on volunteers to a tremendous extent. As a non-profit...you don't have a lot of money to begin with, so the need to hire staff is just not—we're not able to do it because we just don't have the money. When a volunteer comes, that's providing labor or whatever is needed...Volunteers are our greatest resource.

— Dana, Farm leader, Therapy Farm

During the participant observation, I occasionally observed, heard, and wrote about this desire for volunteer labor: “The farm has a lot of weeding that needs to get done. Energetic young adults...would be ideal volunteers for this task. The farm semi-jokingly asked for my help to bring volunteers” (Field notes, July 2016, Therapy Farm).

According to Dana, volunteers provided about 4,000 hours of labor to Therapy Farm each year. Nonetheless, Therapy Farm had multiple paid full- and part-time staff members and, as such, was not wholly reliant on volunteers. While there were notable exceptions, staff members tended to be more skilled, efficient, and reliable than the volunteers: “I was told that the productivity of volunteers varies significantly. One volunteer is more productive than the staff members; other volunteers are less productive” (Field notes, May 2016, Therapy Farm).

Based on the observations and interviews, City Farm’s volunteers contributed less to the production of food and more to other facets of the farm’s non-profit mission. The

chestnut trees planted with the help of middle school students and referenced by Ariel were an example of this; the trees did not provide food but instead enhanced the atmosphere of the farm. Taylor also spoke about the indirect impact of volunteers on City Farm's efforts to educate community members:

It [volunteering] really is saving us thousands of dollars a year...If we didn't have mulch pads, we wouldn't be able to host field trips. I always worry that volunteers are coming out and are not realizing that just because they aren't harvesting something or planting something that they're not contributing in a major way, but they are. They're essential for what we do. It's just that—I guess—I often feel like people underestimate the skill or experience required to do farm work as well...Large groups of people contribute in a major way to a lot of the aspects of our mission, if not the raw number of food produced.

— Farm leader, City Farm

Aside from the two contract workers, Faith Farm was, by definition, dependent on volunteers. Still, the core volunteers were akin to the staff members at City Farm and Therapy Farm. They typically worked multiple days each week, performed the high-skilled and undesirable tasks, and continuously learned more about farming:

Only one of the core volunteers [out of approximately 10 to 15]...had real farming experience prior to Faith Farm, and, even then, that person was not a farmer as their official occupation. As such, Faith Farm has been a learning experience for all of them. They attend conferences and learn how to run the farm more efficiently."

— Field notes, Faith Farm, July 2017

Regarding casual volunteers, Faith Farm both needed and had an abundance of them. The farm hosted about 200 groups and over 5,000 volunteers annually. One weekend in September 2016, approximately 90 volunteers and I harvested potatoes. At one point, we had to take a break because we were working too quickly. I reflected afterward about the implications for labor:

I felt a paradox of volunteer need. On one hand, it's a volunteer-run farm, so volunteers as a collective entity are essential; the farm literally would not function without volunteer labor. On the other hand, there were so many volunteers that

each individual felt less necessary. To be sure, I filled several buckets and was satisfied with my contribution. But if I had left, my absence would not have even been noticeable. Of course, the same cannot be said about the [core] volunteers. They are skilled and important. But for the casual volunteers, it's really about strength in numbers.

— Field notes, September 2016, Faith Farm

Enhancing financial well-being. Although volunteers and staff members sometimes discussed economics informally during the participant observation, I was not privy to the financial details of the farms. Still, in interviews, farm leaders noted that volunteers' contributions were not limited to labor. Rather, volunteers could enhance the financial well-being of the farms in at least three ways: boosting grant applications, requesting donations, and increasing brand recognition. Dana commented about the former: "Volunteers sign in, sign out. For every volunteer hour, that counts for money really when you write a grant, and so that's really important to keep a record of them [i.e., volunteers] coming and going" (Farm leader, Therapy Farm). The other two farms also maintained records of volunteer hours.

Secondly, City Farm asked volunteer groups to provide a donation. When I asked Ariel about the rationale for the request, this was the response:

There are some costs that are pretty straightforward with volunteer management—so gloves, tools, water coolers, staff time. Because when we do a volunteer group, that's at least three hours plus prep time that a staff person has to dedicate just to that group, as opposed to getting other things done in their job description. So those are the more straightforward costs [to the farm] ...I think right now, we're in a period at the farm where the farmers are feeling like the volunteer service from big groups is actually detracting a bit from their mission and their goal—especially big groups, let's say, of white, wealthy people from outside the city which is the majority of who wants to come in...So in order to balance that, they [i.e., the staff members] even ask for money.

— Farm leader, City Farm

Thus, the interaction between the farm and large volunteer groups was perceived as an exchange. Despite often not having the demographic characteristics or geographic origins

that City Farm favored (i.e., diverse people from Baltimore City), volunteer groups received supervision and the opportunity to visit the farm. In return, the farm received money for its programs.

Additionally, having volunteers could enhance people's connectedness to farms, thereby resulting in financial contributions. I asked farm leaders what they would advise other farms who were thinking about hosting volunteers. In response, Taylor cited examples from both City Farm and another farm in Baltimore:

I know we've had people who have come out here as [part of] corporate volunteer days and have ended up donating money to [the CBO]. Or their organizations, a foundation connected to their office, whatever it is, have ended up donating money to [the CBO] or given an in-kind donation...because people had a positive experience here, liked what we were doing, and that was the only way they ever would've gotten to be a part of it. Or...like [another farm's] example: those people are also extremely regular customers in addition to being volunteers. There's a lot of marketing and brand aspect that I think are important to it as well.

Being an inherent part of farms' missions. Volunteering was inextricably linked to the missions of the three farms, as it was a means to educate and engage community members. For example, at the beginning of each volunteer day, a staff member from the park location of City Farm gave first-time volunteers a tour of the farm—the duration of which varied but was around 30 minutes, on average. The tour consumed a staff member's time and also took away from the potential productivity of volunteers. Yet, the farm performed the tours anyhow, seemingly due to the desire to educate community members.

Furthermore, City Farm allowed a limited number of people to come outside of volunteer hours and join staff members performing tasks. Taylor explained that, in such

instances, volunteers' mistakes were tolerable, provided that the errors were accompanied by a commitment to learning:

We're a non-profit farm so if he [i.e., a volunteer] doesn't do the best job harvesting things sometimes, then we can afford to have a little bit of a higher cull rate. It's less about the skills that someone demonstrates and more the commitment that they want to learn more about something. That's what we're here for.

At Therapy Farm, the mission was reflected in the multifarious tasks volunteers were allowed to perform: "Every individual's skill set as I said is very different but we try to accommodate [volunteers] no matter what their skill set is. That's what we're all about anyway. We are here to provide opportunities for all people, all ages" (Dana, farm leader, Faith Farm). Hence, the farm's mission necessitated an effort to accommodate volunteers, even when specific challenges existed. Dana also stressed that all volunteers' contributions ultimately benefited the horticultural therapy: "A lot of times volunteers don't necessarily work directly with our participants, but I think they're always working indirectly no matter what because what we do, we do for them [i.e., the participants in horticultural therapy]" (Farm leader, Therapy Farm).

. As a volunteer-run farm, Faith Farm, its mission, and its volunteers were inseparable. Still, volunteering was especially essential to the farm's mission of bringing people with different backgrounds together to socialize. The partnership with Baltimore City Government exemplified this facet of the mission. After arriving by bus, the children typically prayed with the core volunteers, harvested food for their communities, had lunch together, went for a walk, and viewed the chickens and cows. The children's visit usually lasted approximately four hours, and harvesting occurred for no more than two

hours. Bennie, a repeat volunteer who was a leader of the partnership, stated that the core volunteers valued the direct interactions with community members:

And that's what [a core volunteer] and I wanted to do. He said, "We load our trucks and trailers all day, man, going to Carolina, Pennsylvania and everything," but this is his heartbeat, to do Baltimore—to see firsthand where it's going, not to know if it's going to sit on the truck for a week or whatever they're doing with it, but to know personally that it is getting out and to see the faces... where your stuff is going, that means a lot.

The above example illustrates that Faith Farm often treated volunteering as an opportunity to socialize and connect with people. The goal was not merely producing and donating food. Nevertheless, in other instances, the mission to produce and donate food seemingly spurred a fast work rate. As I wrote after harvesting potatoes with the aforementioned 90 volunteers, "the volunteers worked rather relentlessly" (Field notes, September 2016, Faith Farm).

Challenges for Farms

While volunteers were valuable in many ways, they also posed challenges for farms. Volunteers required supervision and scheduling, and they could work slowly and make mistakes. Moreover, the times when people wanted to volunteer did not always align with the times when volunteers' labor was needed.

Need for supervision. First, most volunteers required supervision. This need for oversight could detract from high-priority tasks that were considered unsuitable for volunteers. For example, the park location of City Farm moved its weekday volunteer hours to another day because it was too difficult for staff members to balance harvesting for the farmers' market with supervising volunteers doing other tasks. Relatedly, I asked Taylor why City Farm set specific hours for casual volunteers, and the answer was as follows:

There are things that would never get done on the farm without volunteers, but it's not like volunteer labor can manage and supervise itself. It takes additional staff time to manage volunteers, so we've laid it out in such a way that we always have volunteers coming at times when we feel like we have the staff power to manage them.

Later during the interview, in response to my question about advice for other farms, Taylor repeated the point: “I think that you have to recognize that it’s going to be work to take volunteers. It’s not going to be free labor.”

Providing supervision could also be time consuming for farms. Unlike City Farm, Therapy Farm permitted all volunteers to come any time during the week. The farm just requested advanced notice from volunteers, when possible. Yet, this flexible system also created disadvantages—most notably the need to manage the varied schedules of volunteers:

A lot of times we get so busy at the farm [that] it's really difficult to stop and accommodate that volunteer. Not always do we definitely have a plan cited for that person when they come. We try to and we have a white board that goes out for the tasks of the day, so we can look at what needs to be done on the farm and...that makes it easier...What if we get somebody that is a little less functioning or maybe they have some physical issues or whatever? You really have to accommodate for them as well. That can pose some deliberations on our part, more time put into trying to get them to fit in...but I think it's important to fit everybody in.

— Dana, Farm leader, Therapy Farm

At Faith Farm, managing casual volunteers appeared to be more straightforward, as harvesting a single crop was the usual task. The core volunteers directed the parking, gave overviews of the farm, and instructed and supervised the casual volunteers. Still, overseeing numerous volunteers was not easy. In addition to the considerable amount of time that was undoubtedly spent scheduling volunteer groups, the core volunteers had to plan and prepare for the day’s tasks. For instance, Bennie and the core volunteers met for about 30 minutes prior to the arrival of the children. Also, providing constant supervision

was not possible. There often were not enough core volunteers, compared with the number of casual volunteers:

The core volunteers were away from the trailer—discussing logistics on the phone, I believe. So, I helped by emptying the zucchinis into the bins [in the trailers]. Being younger and shorter in stature, I’m not sure the volunteers could have done it without me.

— Field notes, July 2017

Scheduling and unreliability. Cancellations, early departures, and late arrivals were potentially problematic for farms as well. In the following example, Therapy Farm narrowly avoided a frustrating situation:

The smaller volunteer group cancelled around 9:30 in the morning. This news initially seemed troubling; at least one of the staff members came in later specifically to accommodate the volunteers. It ended up being OK though because the larger group...still planned to come.

— Field notes, July 2016

Moreover, on a day in June at City Farm, “it was quite hot; one of the volunteers had to get water, take a break...and leave early” (Field Notes, June 2016, Faith Farm). Another time, a volunteer group came late, and, consequently, we did not start working until 50 minutes after my arrival: “Part of this time was devoted to a farm tour...but some of it was spent waiting. I thought the volunteer group had cancelled or forgotten, so I guess it was best they ended up coming” (Personal reflections, May 2017, City Farm).

Analogously, one morning at Faith Farm, the core volunteers wanted to begin early to minimize the impacts of high temperatures. However, due to a late arrival and issues with the group’s transportation, the harvesting of zucchinis started nearly an hour late.

Beyond the more egregious challenges for farms associated with volunteers’ inconsistency, Taylor underscored that paid staff members were generally more reliable and could be counted on to be present and perform tasks:

Often people who have volunteered frequently, [we] will put in charge of other volunteers or put in charge of doing small tasks around the farm that [we] know they know how to do. That's great to have the extra set of hands. Unfortunately, part of it is it'd always be better to have paid regular workers just because of the reliability. That's a hugely important part is knowing that you're going to have the right number of people to do a job, and that can never just really be replicated with volunteers

— Farm leader, City Farm

Inefficiency and errors. Furthermore, the inefficiency or counterproductive actions of some volunteers posed a challenge for all three farms. At City Farm, an enthusiastic and determined group of volunteers nonetheless worked in a slow manner: “Initially, the work efficiency seemed to be lacking...The volunteers would fill up the wheelbarrows halfway, then two people would go and drop off the mulch together” (Field notes, August 2016, City Farm). In a more flagrant case, “a group planted beets, but they apparently didn’t do a good job, [as] the seedlings were sprouting everywhere” (Field notes, April 2016, City Farm). At Therapy Farm, “there was some concern...about people—probably volunteers—deadheading flowers incorrectly” (Field notes, September 2016, Therapy Farm).

My participation as a volunteer provided insight into how such mistakes could occur, as I was responsible for numerous errors myself. Even spraying the neem oil, a task purportedly suited for volunteers, was difficult for me:

I initially messed up the spraying by focusing on the blooms; you're only supposed to spray the stems. Fortunately, I was quickly corrected. Later in the day, I also sprayed the wrong flower row. It was fine, as there was nothing wrong with spraying them. But the zinnias were the higher priority.

— Field notes, August 2016, Therapy Farm

I also committed a minor error while harvesting cabbages at Faith Farm—another ostensibly simple task: “We were asked [by a core volunteer] to be careful throwing

because a cabbage hitting the side of the trailer could result in bruising...I made an errant throw soon after that” (Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm).

Mismatch between need for and demand from volunteers. During the wintertime, City Farm reduced the number of volunteer opportunities but still held weekday volunteer hours at the park location. Ariel described volunteering during this time period as a “double-edged sword” (farm leader, City Farm). The volunteers were able to accomplish tasks such as “laying down fresh gravel on the driveway, filling potholes, painting the sheds, [and] building new raised beds—things that [were] extra.” However, groups often contacted the farm wanting to volunteer and not realizing that tasks were limited and the winter weather could lead to cancelations. The farm “usually [had] to make up work for volunteers in the winter” (Ariel, farm leader). After a conversation with a staff member, I also wrote in my field notes about the challenges associated with the mismatch between farms’ needs and volunteers’ desires:

I was told that spring is a busy time for volunteers because of the beautiful weather and students on spring break...However, finding work to do can be difficult because the spring plants are just starting after the winter. Fortunately, there sometimes is work to do in the hoop houses. Around May is when the farm is busy...and there are still a decent number of volunteers. Summers are busy because crops like basil and tomatoes require a lot of care, but—with it being so hot outside—there aren’t usually as many volunteers. The volunteering typically picks up again in the fall.

— Field notes, August 2016, City Farm

A misalignment was most apparent at City Farm, but uncontrollable circumstances also impacted volunteer rates at Therapy Farm. In July 2016, I wrote, “It was incredibly hot outside. I overheard that one of the...volunteers wasn’t going to be able to come back until the weather cooled down. I suspect that the heat may have deterred other volunteers too—hence, the low number.” (Field notes). Volunteers’

changing life circumstances also impacted volunteering for Therapy Farm: “Two of the interns recently finished their internship with the farm; another is coming more sporadically due to other commitments” (Field notes, August 2016).

Summary of Volunteering’s Contributions and Hindrances

In sum, although volunteers sometimes helped the three farms complete tasks and achieve their missions, helpfulness was not guaranteed. Volunteers also posed difficulties with regard to supervision, scheduling, efficiency, and demand. Lionel, a repeat solo volunteer, nicely summarized the contributions and detractions associated with hosting volunteers:

I do know that the contributions of staff members are week-long. Contributions of volunteers are for three hours on a Saturday morning. Sure, when we have a lot of volunteers, we can get a lot done. But we [volunteers] won’t get it done as meticulously or maybe not even correctly. If it was run on volunteers, everything would go down the drain. That is my personal opinion. You got to have somebody who knows what they’re doing to be able to lead those who don’t know what they’re doing.

— Lionel, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm¹¹

Discussion

The findings presented in this paper affirm the need to better understand the diversity of volunteers’ experiences. I conducted participant observation at three farms in Maryland. Yet, the volunteer experiences at each farm were unique—depending, for example, on the missions of the farms and the skills and trustworthiness of the volunteers. Large-scale quantitative studies on the determinants and impacts of volunteering have yielded important insights, and this line of research should be continued (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Still, more studies are needed on specific types of

¹¹ Faith Farm was an exception to Lionel’s comment, as the farm was run by volunteers and was not going “down the drain”; yet, the core volunteers functioned as staff members and displayed an extraordinary devotion to the farm.

volunteering (e.g., agricultural volunteering), as well as the range of experiences within those types. Not only may experiences impact volunteers' fulfillment of motives, satisfaction, and time spent volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein, 2008); they may influence the extent to which organizations' missions are achieved.

Relatedly, the findings were consistent with those of previous studies that revealed differences in who performed tasks within organizations. Some tasks were done exclusively by staff members; some were done solely by volunteers; and some were done by both volunteers and staff members (Chum et al., 2013; Handy et al., 2008). This differentiation was also apparent at City Farm and Therapy Farm. At the former farm, staff members did most of the harvesting, whereas Therapy Farm's staff members typically oversaw the horticultural therapy groups. Even at Faith Farm, the core volunteers functioned as staff members; they performed a wide array of tasks and were essential to the farm. The casual volunteers combined to form a critical mass for harvesting, but, as individuals, their presence was not as essential as the core volunteers'.

Few prior studies had been performed on volunteering in agriculture, but there was at least one notable exception. Ekers and colleagues (2015) collected data from an online survey of farms in Ontario, Canada. They found that less profitable farms particularly relied upon nonwage workers; farms touted non-economic incentives for such workers; and having non-wage workers also presented challenges, as they were often less skilled and reliable (Ekers et al., 2015). The findings from my research were similar, but there were important differences between the two studies.

First, Ekers and colleagues' (2015) study was conducted in Ontario, but my research was done in Maryland. Given the significance of national and local policies for

agricultural labor, it is reasonable to suggest that Ontario and Maryland are not the same with regard to agricultural volunteering (Rodman et al., 2016). Secondly, Ekers et al.'s (2015) article concentrated largely on interns and apprentices, whereas my participant observation and interviews mainly captured casual—or at least informal—volunteering. Additional research is needed that examines variation among different categories of volunteers. Next, my research utilized a qualitative case study approach, as opposed to an online survey.¹²

Lastly, while Ekers and colleagues' (2015) article focused on benefits and challenges for farms and volunteers, my findings suggest that volunteering can have more far-reaching implications. Volunteers may meaningfully impact communities by contributing to and being part of the non-profit missions of civic agriculture sites. Like the gleaners in Hoisington and colleagues' (2001) study, the volunteers at Faith Farm rapidly harvested thousands of pounds of food for organizations and people in need.¹³ Moreover, City Farm's volunteers enabled educational field trips, and Therapy Farm's volunteers supported the horticultural therapy, if often indirectly. Thus, volunteers can meaningfully advance missions such as those identified by Dimitri et al. (2016). These missions correspond to Lyson's (2004) vision for civic agriculture.

Volunteers were also an inherent part of the farms' missions. City Farm sacrificed productivity and gave volunteers a lengthy farm tour; Therapy Farm endeavored to accommodate volunteers with different abilities; and even Faith Farm sometimes prioritized social interactions over harvesting and donating food. Thus, agricultural

¹² The 2015 article presented results from the online survey (Ekers et al., 2015). However, the project in Ontario also employed semi-structured interviews (Ekers & Levkoe, 2016).

¹³ As discussed in Chapter 4, the food went to large organizations (e.g., food banks), passersby, and volunteers—the latter of whom sometimes came in groups and brought food back to their places of origin.

volunteering should not always be viewed as a one-sided relationship in which farms benefit from free labor. Rather, volunteering sometimes involves an exchange between farms and volunteers, with the ultimate goal of benefiting both parties and the wider community. This finding is consistent with the U.S.' Fair Labor Standards Act, which exempts non-profits from paying volunteers.

Finally, farm work is commonly portrayed in the media as low-skilled labor, but my research indicates that farming actually requires substantial skills (see e.g., Porter, 2017). Although there were exceptions, the high efficiency of staff members at the farms was often contrasted with the low or medium efficiency of volunteers. This contrast was also evident in previous studies of nonwage agricultural labor (Ekers et al., 2015; Terry, 2014).

Practical Implications

My goal in crafting this paper was to explore both the benefits and challenges of agricultural volunteering for farms. The objective was not to advocate that farms host volunteers, nor did I intend to characterize the case study sites as prototypes for hosting volunteers. Nevertheless, City Farm, Therapy Farm, and Faith Farm were all relatively unique and could provide “transferable” insights for other farms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

City Farm did not need volunteers for harvesting, but the farm partly achieved its educational mission by having volunteers mulch the pathways; this mulching was a simple task, but it saved the farm money and allowed field trips to occur. Other farms may consider similarly creative ways to engage volunteers in low-risk but meaningful activities. Similarly, despite the drawbacks, Therapy Farm’s flexible scheduling and formal application process facilitated long-term volunteering. The farm had fewer total

volunteers than City Farm and Faith Farm, but volunteers' consistency—as well as the ability to match people to desired tasks—were apparent. Other small farms might consider creating forms for prospective volunteers to indicate their task preferences in advance. Faith Farm's partnerships with organizations (e.g., Baltimore City Government, churches) may also represent an example for other civic agriculture sites to follow. These organizations simultaneously provided socialization and a critical mass for labor.

Theoretical Implications

Previous studies of non-wage work cited farms' motivation to meet labor needs (Ekers et al., 2015; Mostafanezhad et al., 2016; Terry, 2014). My participant observation yielded evidence of the need for efficient help, as farms generally expected volunteers to either avoid certain tasks or to perform them competently. The farms also endeavored to maximize the use of staff members' abilities.

Still, there was also evidence of attempts to form J.K. Gibson-Graham's (2006) conception of a community economy—that is, the pursuit of community development that took into account both economic and non-economic activities and how they could work together to meet places' myriad needs. This notion of a community economy, for example, was manifest at Faith Farm, as thousands of pounds of food were harvested and donated in the span of a few hours. At City Farm, the chestnut trees were not going to yield monetary rewards, but, according to a farm leader, they nonetheless bolstered the farm's environment.

Strengths and Limitations

The research presented in this paper possessed at least three limitations. First, while conducting participant observation at multiple farms had its advantages—mostly

notably being able to make comparisons across sites—it also meant that I was unable to totally immerse myself into one location (Yin, 2014). As such, I may have missed subtleties about volunteering, as well as relevant information regarding general farm operations. Results related to Faith Farm were the most vulnerable to such a limitation. I was only able to conduct seven observations and two interviews at that farm, though, as noted earlier, the experiences of casual volunteers at Faith Farm were more uniform than the experiences at City Farm and Therapy Farm.

Second, although I endeavored to conduct the participant observation across multiple months, I did not fully capture seasonal variation in volunteering. For example, regular observations at Therapy Farm began in June 2016. Soon after that, multiple long-term volunteers at that site discontinued their volunteering. I conducted two additional observations at Therapy Farm in May 2017, but the months of February, March, and April remained without observations.¹⁴ Unlike the volunteers referenced by Dana, I did not start seeds in the greenhouse in the springtime. Similarly, the observations at City farm occurred between April and November.

Moreover, I employed multiple methods and was able to experience and speak with people about many facets of volunteering. However, I focused primarily on casual volunteers. I did not, for example, conduct interviews with the AmeriCorps members at City Farm. The AmeriCorps members acted as staff members, and, as such, I felt that there was a strong justification for not interviewing them. Still, future research should explore the role of AmeriCorps members at farms and the extent to which such positions emulate aspects of the volunteering described in this paper. Lastly, I concentrated on

¹⁴ Therapy Farm was only open administratively in January. There was no outdoor work available for volunteers.

volunteers who performed outdoor tasks that were directly related to farming. I did not observe or interview anyone about indoor, administrative tasks (e.g., grant writing).

The above limitations notwithstanding, I was able to conduct an abundance of participant observation at the three farms. Participant observation is especially suited to understanding what people actually do. Therefore, the method was ideal for addressing the first aim of this paper—that is, exploring the scope of volunteers' tasks. Additionally, I conducted interviews with both volunteers and farm leaders. As such, the research involved the triangulation of sources and methods (Patton, 1999). Finally, I was able to compare and contrast volunteering at farms that had unique missions and organizational structures (Yin, 2014).

Conclusions

To conclude, I conducted interviews and participant observation at three farms in or near Baltimore City, Maryland—an urban community farm, a therapeutic farm, and a volunteer-run, faith-based farm. Volunteers' labor sometimes advanced the unique missions of the farms. Moreover, volunteering was an inherent part of farms' missions: The farms sacrificed staff members' time in order to educate and socialize with volunteers. Despite volunteers' contributions, they could also make mistakes, be unreliable, and need supervision. Thus, the characterization of volunteers' labor as free for farms is too simplistic. Rather, volunteering can sometimes be a means for farms to achieve missions and positively impact volunteers and communities.

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CHAPTER 6: PAPER THREE

“It’s one of the best therapies around”: The antecedents and consequences of volunteering for volunteers at three Maryland Farms

Abstract

In the United States, approximately one-fourth of people volunteer annually for an organization. Still, despite the high prevalence of volunteering, researchers have given insufficient attention to the antecedents and consequences of volunteering and how they may vary within and across settings. A particular setting that merits further examination is civic agriculture, which is a system of food production that emphasizes the economic, social, and environmental needs of local communities. In this paper, I use qualitative data from three civic agriculture sites to explore volunteers’ reasons for volunteering, as well the consequences of volunteering for volunteers. An urban community farm (City Farm), a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm), and a volunteer-run farm (Faith Farm) were the study sites. In addition to interviews with 16 volunteers and three farm leaders, I conducted 62 observations totaling approximately 190 hours. The reasons for volunteering included social connections, the desire to be busy, and wanting to learn about farming. Severe weather (e.g., high temperatures) and the physical nature of farming were two of the potential deterrents. Regarding consequences, volunteering appeared to provide stress relief, exercise, education, and socialization, among other benefits. However, difficulties also existed, such as issues with supervision and adverse health effects (e.g., muscle soreness). The findings underscore the relatively unique antecedents and consequences (e.g., stress relief) of agricultural volunteering in comparison to other types of volunteering. The results also indicate that providing volunteer opportunities can attract

new people to civic agriculture and possibly spur broader changes. Finally, while there are potential benefits for volunteers, challenges exist as well. Agricultural volunteering may not be well-suited to every individual or farm. To maximize volunteer satisfaction, farms should take steps such as providing equipment, ensuring volunteers receive the proper supervision, and expressing appreciation for volunteers.

Introduction

According to the Current Population Survey (CPS), over 62 million people in the United States formally volunteered for an organization between September 2014 and September 2015 (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016). One-third of volunteers reported that they volunteered for 100 hours or more throughout the year (BLS, 2016). The median contribution of volunteers was an hour per week. These numbers include volunteering for places such as churches and schools but do not reflect helping someone informally (e.g., mowing a neighbor's yard). Given the high frequency of formal volunteering, it is important to understand the reasons people volunteer for organizations, as well as the potential consequences of such volunteering.

To date, numerous analyses of U.S. survey data, among other sources, have sought to identify antecedents of volunteering such as pro-social values, religiosity, and youth volunteer experiences (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Some studies have examined differences based on type of volunteering. Evangelical Protestants, for example, often volunteer for their own churches, and individuals with school-aged children are more likely to volunteer for educational institutions than people without children (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006; Jones, 2001).

Nevertheless, further research is needed about the reasons people engage in specific volunteer activities.

Moreover, studies have identified improved physical health, mental health, and overall quality of life as some of the potential consequences for volunteers (Jenkinson et al., 2013; Okun, Yeung, & Brown, 2013; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; van Willigen, 2000; Wheeler et al., 1998). However, the exact mechanisms for these improvements are unknown, and it is not clear to what extent the consequences of volunteering vary across contexts and age groups (Jenkinson et al., 2013; Musick & Wilson, 2008; van Willigen, 2000).¹

Thus, while the existing literature has yielded invaluable insights about general trends and statistical associations for volunteering in the U.S., insufficient attention has been paid to the diversity of volunteering within and across settings (Wilson, 2012). A particular context that merits further examination is civic agriculture—defined by the sociologist Thomas Lyson (2000) as “a locally-based agricultural and food production system that is tightly linked to a community’s social and economic development,” (p. 42). Under this system, mutually supportive relationships among farmers, customers, and surrounding community members are desirable (Lyson, 2005). Hosting volunteers can be one way for farms to foster such relationships. However, few studies have been conducted on volunteering in civic agriculture.

In this paper, I endeavor to address these gaps, with a focus on antecedents and consequences for volunteers at three civic agriculture sites in Maryland. First, though, I

¹ Van Willigen (2000) analyzed panel data from the *Americans’ Changing Lives* study and found that the benefits of volunteering (i.e., satisfaction and self-reported health) were more pronounced for older adults than for younger individuals.

provide additional details about previous studies on volunteering generally—that is, research not specific to civic agriculture; this research has often but not always been based on national survey data. I then summarize the literature more directly pertinent to civic agriculture.

Background

General Research on Volunteering

Antecedents not specific to agriculture. In the general literature, a positive association has been found between volunteering and the following: formal education, income, and association memberships (Gesthuizen & Scheepers, 2012; Huang, van den Brink, & Groot, 2009, Liu & Besser, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008). These relationships are not always direct, linear, or straightforward. The association with income, for example, is mediated by being asked to volunteer and belonging to formal associations (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Higher income individuals are more likely to encounter opportunities to volunteer (Bryant, Jeon-Slaughter, Kang, & Tax, 2003).²

Studies have also linked higher volunteer rates to religiosity, youth volunteering, and pro-social values (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011). For example, using U.S. national survey data and a broad definition of religiosity, Taniguchi and Thomas (2011) found differences in volunteering based on religious beliefs. Respondents who believed in the religious imperative to listen to, tolerate, and care for other people were more likely to volunteer for both secular and religious organizations. By contrast, people with religiously

² Bryant and colleagues (2003) found that the probability of being asked increased for income only up to \$160,000. The relationship was u-shaped instead of linear.

exclusive values (e.g., favoring time with people of the same religious faith) were only more likely to volunteer for religious organizations (Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011).

In addition to social factors and personal values, volunteers' motivations can include the acquisition of skills or knowledge, personal gratification, or career development (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996). One reason these motivations are crucial to understand is that the fulfillment of goals influences volunteers' satisfaction and the amount of time volunteers devote to volunteering (Finkelstein, 2008).³ Additionally, volunteer recruitment strategies that appeal to people's motivations may be more successful than those strategies that do not (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, & Haugen, 1994; Clary et al., 1998).

Barriers to volunteering are also notable. In one analysis of U.S. survey data, more than two-fifths of non-volunteers reported that having more time would increase the likelihood of volunteering (Sundeen, Raskoff, & Garcia, 2007). However, approximately a quarter of the sample expressed no interest in volunteering, regardless of circumstances. Fourteen percent of non-volunteers cited health limitations, making them the third most commonly reported barrier behind insufficient time and a lack of interest (Sundeen et al., 2007).

Consequences not specific to agriculture. With regard to benefits, volunteering may result in improvements to health (Jenkinson et al., 2013; Okun et al., 2013; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Wheeler et al., 1998). Studies on this topic have been methodologically rigorous—often using control groups and longitudinal designs. However, uncertainties remain. Participants in studies of volunteering have usually been older adults; the precise

³ The functional approach to volunteering emphasizes the importance of matching volunteers' motivations and experiences (Clary et al., 1996)

mechanisms linking volunteering and health are unknown; and it is not clear if volunteering has a special advantage over other forms of social activity (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Therefore, studies of specific volunteer activities may offer insights into the pathways between volunteering and enhanced health.

Volunteering has also been associated with larger social networks, improved job prospects, altered values, and higher life satisfaction (Borgonovi, 2008; Janoski et al., 1998; Morrow-Howell, Hong, & Tang, 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1998, 2003; van Willigen, 2000). Still, additional research is needed to explore the nature of these relationships and how they may differ based on the setting. For example, with regard to which values are changed or how satisfaction is impacted, are the consequences of volunteering at civic agriculture sites different than the consequences of volunteering in other settings?

Volunteering at Civic Agriculture Sites

Potential antecedents for volunteering in civic agriculture. The limited existing research suggests that the aforementioned antecedents of volunteering (e.g., learning, professional development) may also be relevant to civic agriculture. In response to an online survey in Ontario, farm operators touted the opportunity for volunteers, interns, and apprentices to gain knowledge of farming (Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015).

Studies of Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) also indicate that the prospect of nonmonetary rewards may inspire engagement at farms. WWOOF is an arrangement in which people known as WWOOFers agree to help on organic farms (i.e., hosts) in return for room and board. Scholars sometimes refer to WWOOFing as

“volunteer tourism” (Yamamoto & Engelsted, 2014); however, the exchange is ostensibly mutual and does not satisfy common definitions of volunteering, which tend to emphasize a net cost for volunteers (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996). Nevertheless, WWOOFers and WOOF hosts have reported benefits such as learning about farming, forging social relationships, maintaining an environmentally conscious lifestyle, and experiencing nature (Miller & Mair, 2015; Yamamoto & Engelsted, 2014). These benefits may also be relevant to volunteers.

Moreover, there may be social and instrumental reasons for volunteering at farms. Pole and Grey (2013), for instance, surveyed members of community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. The opportunity to volunteer was ranked as highly important by only 4% of respondents. Yet, approximately 69% of respondents volunteered for their CSA. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were not required to volunteer but did so anyway—suggesting that volunteer opportunities and social factors can lead people to volunteer even when volunteering is not a personal priority for them.

As is the case with other volunteer activities, an absence of time or interest may form a barrier to volunteering at civic agriculture sites (Sundeen et al., 2007). More uniquely, physical limitations may discourage agricultural volunteering, especially with regard to hands-on, outdoor tasks.

Finally, scholars have criticized the lack of racial diversity at civic agriculture sites and the places at which they sell—terming them problematically “white spaces” (Guthman, 2008, 2017). More studies need to empirically examine the relationship between race and volunteering at farms, but research with customers and farmers indicates that racial dynamics vary across settings (Alkon, 2008; Byker, Shanks, Misyak,

& Serrano, 2012). An analysis of a Michigan telephone survey found that Latinos were significantly more likely to value local foods but were significantly less likely to attend farmers' markets. The authors attributed this incongruence to Latinos feeling unwelcome (Conner, Colasanti, Ross, & Smalley, 2010).

Thus, while few studies have concentrated on volunteering at farms, the noteworthy exceptions—and related lines of research—suggest that particular values, goals, resources, and identities may motivate or deter volunteers.

Potential consequences of volunteering in civic agriculture. Volunteering in civic agriculture may offer unique benefits for volunteers. Changes in taste preferences, eating habits, and priorities have been observed among CSA members, school garden participants, and community garden participants (Allen, Rossi, Woods, & Davis, 2016; Barnridge et al., 2013; Cohen, Gearhart, & Garland, 2012; Cox et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2015; Parmer, Salisbury-Glennon, Shannon, & Struempfer, 2009).⁴ Even though this research has not centered on volunteers, the findings may nevertheless be germane to volunteering at farms. In addition to possible benefits for diets or nutrition, studies with adults have found that gardening significantly reduces stress, as indicated by both self-report measures and biological assessments of cortisol levels (Hawkins, Thirlaway, Backx, & Clayton, 2011; van den Berg & Custers, 2011).

Conceptual Framework and Specific Aims

The Volunteer Process Model guided the research presented in this paper (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). According to this model, the process of volunteering involves

⁴ In citing these studies, I do not mean to suggest that the associations are causal or conclusive. The research about school gardens and fruit and vegetable, for example, has yielded promising but mixed results (Berezowitz, Bontrager Yoder, & Schoeller, 2015; Christian, Evans, Nykjaer, Hancock, & Cade, 2014; Davis, Spaniol, & Somerset, 2015).

antecedents, experiences, and consequences for four different but interrelated levels: individual volunteers, interpersonal relationships, organizations, and communities. This paper focuses on the antecedents and consequences for farm volunteers. Thus, based on the model and the literature cited above, I explore answers to two research questions:

Question 1: What are the reasons for, as well as potential deterrents to, volunteering at three civic agriculture sites in Maryland?

Question 2: What are the desirable and undesirable consequences of volunteering for volunteers at three civic agriculture sites in Maryland?

Both immediate and longer-term consequences are included in this paper.

Immediate consequences (e.g., satisfaction) could also be placed in the experiences stage of the Volunteer Process Model (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Nevertheless, in the interest of simplicity, I treat them as consequences.

Methods

I conducted a case study of three civic agriculture sites in Maryland: an urban community farm (City Farm), a therapeutic farm (Therapy Farm), and a volunteer-run farm (Faith Farm). The names used in this paper are pseudonyms. The three sites were chosen for their unique missions, locations, and organizational structures. I interviewed 16 volunteers and three farm leaders. I also performed approximately 190 hours of participant observation across the three sites. All data were analyzed using an integrated inductive and deductive approach to coding (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board reviewed the research plan and designated the study as exempt.

Research Sites

City Farm. City Farm is an urban community farm in Baltimore, Maryland with two sites. One site is inside a city park, and the other site is in a more residential location next to rowhomes and city streets. The farm's mission is fourfold: enhance food access, especially for individuals in Baltimore who are homebound or have low incomes; educate and engage communities via outreach and on-farm activities (e.g., a community composting program, cooking demonstrations, workshops); train new farmers (e.g., through the AmeriCorps program); and promote environmental sustainability. A mobile farmers' market, a traditional farmers' market, and a community supported agriculture program are some of the marketing channels for the farm. City Farm invites volunteers to help for three-hour time periods on specified days each week—that is, one or two weekdays and some Saturdays. The farm is part of a larger community-based organization (CBO).

Therapy Farm. The second farm specializes in horticultural therapy and skills training for people of all ages and abilities. Individuals and groups of people can engage in hands-on activities to alleviate physical and psychological ailments. The farm also runs educational programming for beginning farmers, many of whom are veterans. Therapy Farm sells products such as vegetables, flowers, and herbs to CSA members, restaurants, wholesalers, and passersby, among other buyers. Flowers grow in abundance and are intended to enhance the therapeutic feel of the farm. The farm requires people who want to volunteer repeatedly to complete a volunteer application and pass a background check. Volunteers are welcome to help any time they are available.

Faith Farm. In contrast to the other two farms, Faith Farm is run and staffed almost entirely by volunteers.⁵ The farm mostly needs casual volunteers and volunteer groups for harvesting during the summer and fall months (i.e., June through November). In addition, a core group of volunteers essentially serve as unpaid staff members—keeping the farm organized and functioning throughout the year.

Christianity forms the foundation of Faith Farm, and the farm’s pavilion area has Bible verses about feeding hungry people. Faith Farm grows crops such as potatoes, corn, and beans. The farm gives all of the food—nearly 1,700,000 pounds in 2016—to volunteers, individuals in need (e.g., passersby), and organizations (e.g., food banks, churches) that serve low-income populations.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews. I interviewed 16 volunteers—nine from City Farm, five from Therapy Farm, and two from Faith Farm. Interviews were also conducted with two farm leaders from City Farm and one farm leader from Therapy Farm. These leaders were staff members who commonly interacted with and made decisions about volunteers.

I used a combination of convenience and maximum variation sampling to recruit volunteers to be interviewed. Specifically, I identified possible interviewees while conducting participant observation at the farms. Factors such as time spent volunteering, organizational affiliations, and demographics (e.g., race, age) were considered. In two instances, I announced my role as a researcher to entire volunteer groups, thereby resulting in six total interviews. Four of these six interviews were from Therapy Farm, where the volunteer group had been consistently active for several weeks. In all other

⁵ In 2016, the farm created two subcontract positions—one for high-skilled farm tasks and the other for marketing. Still, the bulk of the work is done by volunteers.

cases, I selectively approached and recruited interviewees. To meet the inclusion criteria, interviewees had to be a volunteer, a minimum of 18 years of age, and comfortable conversing in English.

The characteristics of interviewees who were volunteers are shown in Table 3.1 of Chapter 3. I asked interviewees to complete a short demographic questionnaire to accompany the interview. One of the questions was open-ended and read as follows: How would you describe your race/ethnicity? This question yielded an assortment of responses. The other demographic questions were close-ended. Overall, a slight majority ($n = 9$) of the sample was female; all but three interviewees were 34 years of age or younger; and thirteen were repeat volunteers. To protect confidentiality, the demographic characteristics of farm leaders are not reported here.

I referred to interview guides that had questions based on the Volunteer Process Model (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Separate but similar guides were used for volunteers and farm leaders. Interview topics included reasons for volunteering, perceived impacts of volunteering, and challenges for volunteers. I asked follow-up questions, when deemed appropriate. I also asked questions specific to the civic agriculture sites. Interviews lasted an average of about 30 minutes. The longest interview was about 52 minutes, and the briefest was approximately 16 minutes. All interviewees provided oral consent and were offered \$20 for their time.

Participant observation. Between April and December 2016, I performed 50 observations totaling 161.75 hours. Another nine observations (28 hours) occurred between May and July 2017. Thus, the totals were as follows: 76.75 hours from 27 observations at City Farm; 88.5 hours from 25 observations at Therapy Farm; and 24.5

hours from seven observations at Faith Farm. Along with the 59 observations from my own volunteering, I attended and recorded notes for two community events related to City Farm and one event at Therapy Farm. My attendance at these events lasted about four hours combined.

For data collection, I prioritized participation as a volunteer and fully engaged in activities such as planting, harvesting, and weeding. Then, after leaving the sites, I recorded field notes using an observation guide with both structured and unstructured sections. The structured sections included an estimate of the number of volunteers, and the unstructured sections included notes about tasks, information about volunteering, information about general farm operations, and my personal reflections (see Figure 3.1). The personal reflections often pertained to my own experiences as a volunteer. Thus, they are germane to the aims of this paper.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I developed the codebook and coded the interview and participant observation data using a combined inductive and deductive approach to coding (Bradley et al., 2007). Throughout the process, my advisor provided guidance and checked the codebook for clarity. I used the same codebook for both the interview transcripts and the field notes. MAXQDA 12 was the qualitative data analysis software.

The fifteen steps of the analysis are shown in Chapter 3, Figure 3.3. To begin, I organized the codebook according to the Volunteer Process Model. Antecedents, Experiences, and Consequences were the three broad codes, with the four levels (e.g., individual, interpersonal) underneath them in the coding hierarchy (see Figure 3.2). Next, to further familiarize myself with the data, I read the first 13 transcripts and 51 field

notes—including notes from one event—in their entirety. Memos were not written at this time.

Third, based on the aforementioned reading of the data, I developed a preliminary coding hierarchy, with more even more specific sub-codes for each level of the Volunteer Process Model. I also created a code for general farm operations. My advisor and I discussed and refined this hierarchy. Thus, I developed the new codes through a principally inductive process; most codes emerged from the reading of the data. However, a small number of codes were created in anticipation of future interviews. For example, the coded titled “Staff recommendations for improvement” was created because I expected the topic to arise during interviews with farm leaders. I did not develop definitions during Step 3. For the fourth step, I created an initial codebook with codes and definitions.

After creating the original codebook, the coding proceeded iteratively until all 62 field notes and 19 transcripts were coded. Altogether, I revised the codebook three times. For the final step, I identified the codes that were most relevant to the research questions, read through the data, and extracted exemplary quotations. MAXQDA 12 facilitated this final step by allowing me to separately view the coding based on the type of document (i.e., interview transcripts or field notes) or the name of the farm.

Results

Below, I present findings for the antecedents and consequences for volunteers at the three civic agriculture sites. All names are pseudonyms.

Antecedents: Reasons for Volunteering

I categorized volunteers' reasons for volunteering as follows: (1) interpersonal connections, (2) staying busy, (3) exercise; (4) personal values, (5) learning, (6) previous experiences with farming and gardening, (7) outdoor activity, (8) professional and educational development, and (9) the romanticization and broad appeal of farming. Demographic factors such as race—and farms' related efforts to promote community engagement—were also noteworthy antecedents of volunteering.

Interpersonal connections. Being directly asked to volunteer and having connections to a group were prominent reasons given for volunteering at the three civic agriculture sites. When interviewed, Lionel had been volunteering at City Farm for nearly two years. The farm staff knew him well and, on rare occasions, even entrusted him with helping other volunteers. However, aside from getting physical activity, he first volunteered with few expectations about what the experience would offer:

Lionel: *I started volunteering at City Farm through work. One of my coworkers invited me out to come and I came out; I ended up enjoying it. Now, I try to get more of my coworkers to come out as well.*

Me: *Did you have any initial expectations or you just came because your coworkers asked and you're like, "Sure, whatever"? What was your thought process there?*

Lionel: *That was exactly it. They invited me out and I thought, "What the heck, I got nothing else going on a Saturday morning." Come out, see what it's all about and try it, and it's good to get some workout in, some physical labor since I sit at a desk all day [at my job].*

In addition to being asked directly, connections to groups contributed to the presence of volunteers at the three sites. For instance, Carrie led a college group that regularly volunteered at Therapy Farm. Carrie had previously been involved with the garden at her college—which eventually floundered—and she desired to find similar

experiences again. Still, despite Carrie’s personal reasons for selecting Therapy Farm, some of the other group members were drawn to Therapy Farm partially or mainly because they knew Carrie or her group: “I feel like I probably just heard about it [i.e., volunteering] through Carrie because I was sort of friends with her before the semester, and then I remember having a conversation or two with her” (Jon, repeat volunteer, Therapy Farm).

Some groups possessed broad interests in volunteering; their involvement was not limited to farms. Two interviewees from City Farm, Vera and Mathew, were part of a college group that regularly coordinated various volunteer activities in the city. At Therapy Farm, an AmeriCorps group came for multiple weeks at end of each spring. And service-oriented organizations such as churches and schools commonly volunteered at Faith Farm. As a farm leader explained, these groups often sought unique opportunities (e.g., farming):

I think that there are a lot of people who are parts of different cultures of volunteers and who are always looking for new and interesting places to go volunteer. That’s definitely a lot of the groups that we get out here.

— Taylor, City Farm

Families also sometimes volunteered at the three civic agriculture sites. This was most evident at the residential location of City Farm—where the engagement of surrounding communities was highly regarded—and at Faith Farm, where numerous children and youth volunteered on weekends and during the summertime:

One of the regular volunteers had been coming for multiple years, noting that they often brought their kids with them. Another person responded that they wish they had known about the farm sooner because they could’ve brought their kids too.

— Field notes, October 2016, Faith Farm

Not everyone volunteered due to interpersonal factors. Among interviewees, Yvette was attracted to the horticultural therapy at Therapy Farm; Crystal discovered City Farm online and then volunteered repeatedly; Olivia was also drawn to City Farm’s website; and Beverly stumbled upon fliers for each of City Farm’s two sites. Also, as the quotations above underscore, people’s reasons for volunteering were neither singular nor static. Lionel, for example, came with a coworker and enjoyed the experience more than he anticipated.

Staying busy. Some interviewees highlighted the appeal of being active and doing meaningful work—at least when sufficient personal resources (e.g., time, money) enabled them to donate their time. This sentiment was especially evident among students and retirees. As a member of the latter group explained:

You absolutely need to do something. You can’t sit around the house. The options were going and getting another job. I’m comfortable enough [financially]. So volunteering is a great option. There’s plenty to do. City Farm, I think, provides numerous opportunities for that activity.

— Walter, repeat small group volunteer

Volunteering at the farm was compared favorably to what interviewees might otherwise do with their time (e.g., “sitting on my ass at home watching TV”). One person spoke generally but thoughtfully about the subject:

Volunteering at City Farm and just generally like the volunteering I do...it really...is great for structuring my time and my life...I think the average person wastes a lot of time, especially today, the things like Facebook, and you’re wasting so much time with just crap that gets you nowhere. And whether you admit it or not, it’s up to you. But I think it’s the truth, and I feel like [volunteering] gives you something meaningful to do, and it gives you consistency.

— Mathew, repeat group volunteer

Exercise. Physical activity was cited as a motivation by a small number of interviewees. For example, Olivia, who was a first-time volunteer, stated that farming

was desirable because it simultaneously offered exercise and the aforementioned opportunity to do meaningful work: “It feels good to work hard physically and be working towards something...It’s kind of more gratifying than just going for a run.”

Interviewees who had sedentary jobs discussed being particularly motivated by exercise. When asked what she was hoping to gain from volunteering, Crystal said the following: “I guess feeling like I’m doing something with my hands and can actually see progress because a lot of my job is...thinking about things... [and] not as much physical activity.”

Physical activity was more commonly discussed as a consequence or secondary motivator of volunteering, rather than as the main driver. The labor intensiveness of tasks was also a potential challenge or deterrent. Still, the prospect of physical activity—especially combined with other benefits—appealed to some volunteers.

Personal values. A number of interviewees cited values that tended to align with both farming generally and the missions and activities of the site at which they volunteered. Yvette, a repeat solo volunteer (i.e., intern), touted not only the horticultural therapy at Therapy Farm but also the value of being outside, getting exercise, and growing food:

I think it's important to be of service to other people, and I think there are a lot of ways to do that. Horticultural therapy is a fairly direct way that you see results, but I also think feeding the population good food is also important...Being physically active—like a more holistic view of life—is often forgotten about in this day and age, with all the technology and how everyone works in an office.

Similarly, City Farm’s initiatives to promote sustainability and enhance food access (e.g., the mobile market) were commended by volunteers:

Everyone in this program specifically [i.e., in my volunteer group] wants to help vulnerable populations and wants to make some sort of a lasting difference, and

when you're volunteering for an organization whose mission is to provide people who may not otherwise be able to afford it with fresh produce—which is obviously so important for their health...it definitely goes a long way [toward motivating volunteers].

— Kay, first-time group volunteer

At Faith Farm, the religious motivations were more explicitly evident than at the other sites. In addition to the Bible verses that were etched on wooden signs in the pavilion area, the core volunteers frequently prayed and spoke about Jesus—particularly when interacting with groups before and after the harvest times. I wrote the following after a morning spent harvesting approximately 55,000 pounds of potatoes:

At the end of the day (~11:30am), we gathered around, and another prayer was said. They [i.e., a core volunteer] mentioned that they didn't spend Saturday mornings doing this because they hated golf or hated spending time with their wives; they did this because it was the Lord's work.

— Field notes, November 2016

Relatedly, an interviewee from Faith Farm stated that he wanted the credit for his volunteering to be received by God:

I like to stand back [while at the farm] because it's not for my recognition, it's for His [i.e., God's]. I don't want people to see me and see me. I want them to see that Spirit and my light that, "Man, there's something special about that man."

— Bennie, repeat volunteer, Faith Farm

Religious beliefs and feelings abounded at Faith Farm, and a larger proportion of groups were religiously affiliated than at City Farm and Therapy Farm. However, not all groups at Faith Farm were connected to a religion, nor was every individual religious. Esther, a volunteer who spent around 90 hours doing an art project and coordinating a group harvest activity, said she was “not religious at all.” Even so, to her, “everything they [i.e., the people at Faith Farm] do goes towards other people and it's not for themselves at all, which is really nice. It's really selfless, and it's a good cause to get behind” (Esther, repeat volunteer, Faith Farm).

Moreover, at all three civic agriculture sites, interviewees valued the farms' missions and the opportunity to contribute to them. Yet, as the subsequent quotation exemplifies, the interviewees I spoke with generally did not regard their volunteering as heroic or altruistic:

There are just food areas in the city [I am from] that really didn't have access to affordable food and any kind of produce... That's the context that I started doing this work in. So that's always in my head whenever I do it [i.e., work at farms], but this specifically [i.e., volunteering at Therapy Farm], I would just say things like, "I need a break end of the week. This is something outside." Still, doing work that I care about is good.

— Miranda, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Learning. The opportunity to learn about food, farming, and the city attracted some volunteers. At Therapy Farm, while planting flowers, "one person said they wanted to volunteer because they felt that farming was often romanticized, and they wanted to get a first-hand sense of what the work was really like" (Field notes, June 2016). Beverly, a repeat solo volunteer who found City Farm via fliers, likewise desired to learn about farming. But she was also intrigued by the notion of an urban farm:

One of the main things also that was appealing to me was that it [i.e., the food at City Farm] was organic grown, and it was interesting also to actually participate in farming in the city. I just wanted to see, what would it look like? There's a farm here in the city? Like, really? That'd be pretty interesting. So, and maybe hopefully learn a little bit myself [about] how to farm if I want to grow some vegetables in my own garden.

Previous experiences with farming and gardening. Interviewees such as Olivia at City Farm and Miranda and Jon at Therapy Farm had prior experiences working on farms. Before volunteering at Therapy Farm, Jon spent time in South America volunteering at a farm that he had been connected to through a friend. Jon wished to practice his Spanish and learn about farming. This previous experience—in addition to

knowing Carrie—spurred him to continue volunteering at farms once he returned to the United States:

I volunteered for a month on a farm in [South America] this summer and I just wanted to keep that aspect of life in my college life somehow...Especially being at college, it's like such a bubble and it's just so nice to get out and, honestly, just be in nature and work with plants. It's such a different experience than being in a classroom.

By contrast, other volunteers possessed little to no previous background with farming. One interviewee, Vera, began volunteering at City Farm without expectations or a farming background. In her words, she “honestly had no idea what [she] was doing.” However, by the time of the interview—and based on the participant observation—she had become one of City Farm’s most trusted and consistent volunteers. Similarly, Andres, a volunteer at Therapy Farm, described volunteering as a “completely new experience” and said he “wanted something outside of school that was actually going to give [him] space to think, talk to people, and just get an outside perspective of life.”

Outdoor activity. Being outside was a motivation commonly cited in interviews and heard during participant observation. Olivia lauded volunteering at City Farm as “an excuse to be outside,” and Miranda from Therapy Farm stated that she “love[d] being outside.” The implications of being outdoors are discussed in greater detail later in this paper, that is, in the section regarding the consequences of volunteering for volunteers.

Professional and educational development. Building résumés, receiving course credit, and accumulating service hours for school or another purpose (e.g., jobs, religious confirmation) appeared to be relatively common reasons for volunteering. At City Farm, anyone could volunteer during specified times each week, and this enabled people to consistently acquire experience and service hours. Moreover, according to a farm leader,

Taylor, the farm allowed trusted volunteers to come outside of designated volunteer times. One such volunteer had spent her summer at the farm completing service hours for school. She then returned to volunteer the following summer and was viewed as “just a member of the crew when she [was] there.” City Farm also provided service-learning and youth training opportunities.

Therapy Farm similarly had volunteers who were accruing service hours. As people were permitted to volunteer at any time, volunteers—especially high school students—could quickly and conveniently log volunteer hours. Therapy Farm also sometimes had interns (e.g., Yvette) who assumed greater responsibility than other volunteers. Finally, college groups forged partnerships with Therapy Farm:

Right now, we’re working with a project with the engineering department [of a local university] where they’re going to help us doing AgrAbility projects, which means they make adaptive equipment for people that have disabilities so that they can farm.

— Dana, farm leader, Therapy Farm

During my seven observations at Faith Farm, volunteers’ desire for professional and educational development was not as overtly apparent as at the other two farms. Most of the core volunteers were retired men, and many of the groups were affiliated with churches. Yet, the site did not lack people seeking service hours. On one July morning, young people from a church group gathered service hours for religious confirmation. Furthermore, Esther completed the aforementioned art project and brought people to harvest potatoes chiefly because she was fulfilling a requirement for her youth organization.

Romanticization of farming. Interviewees and other volunteers did not commonly reference societal trends related to food and farming. Nonetheless, a leader from City Farm

explained that the farm actually had too many large groups that wanted to volunteer. The leader, Ariel, sometimes tried to convince groups to sign up for other volunteer activities with the CBO besides farming. When I asked Ariel why people were attracted to volunteering at City Farm—or to farming in general—this was the response:

I think the first step is people say, “I want to volunteer. I’ll go to Baltimore.” Second step is “What do I want to do? Urban farming looks so cool and sexy. I want to do that.” ...City Farm has done a good job over its lifespan of marketing and having a brand and a color scheme and being out in the community and doing amazing work. So I think the sexiness is real on some level. It is an amazing program. I think people like doing hard work and touching the dirt and making food.

Race and community engagement. I conducted 27 observations at City Farm. During those observations, the volunteers at City Farm tended to be racially diverse, though the demographics depended on which group was volunteering. On some visits, a majority of volunteers looked to be white, whereas in other instances, most volunteers appeared to be African-American. The farm’s location in a majority African-American area of Baltimore City presumably contributed to the demographic heterogeneity, but City Farm also intentionally promoted community engagement and diversity. As Ariel explicated, because so many groups wanted to volunteer, City Farm prioritized groups from Baltimore, often meaning people of color: “I think that the farmers [at City Farm] have really made that conscious decision to...really open the doors wide open to the communities that surround the farm, which are mostly people of color that are experiencing poverty and lack of...healthy food access.”

Of City Farm’s two locations—one inside a city park and the other surrounded by streets and rowhomes—the residential location especially tried to attract nearby community members. For example, this location started a workshare program, whereby

volunteers received \$30 worth of vouchers for the Mobile Market in exchange for three hours of volunteering. When I interviewed Taylor in June 2017, approximately 40 people had signed up for the workshare. Many workshare members were African-Americans who lived near the farm.

City Farm's efforts to engage communities were aspirational and ever-changing. For example, between 2016 and 2017, the value of three hours of volunteering for the workshare program increased from \$10 to \$30. Taylor described the continuous efforts in this way:

I do feel like we've made pretty significant gains on it [i.e., community engagement], especially in the last year or two years as...we restructured [the staff's] job descriptions a little bit so that we could focus more on engaging the community, and I think that that's been really successful...I think that it's hard to set a standard for success, and you can always be doing better, definitely...We definitely put a lot of effort into it.

Unlike City Farm, Faith Farm was in a predominately white area. This was partially reflected in the people who volunteered—a majority of whom were white—but the demographics of Faith Farm were not homogenous. For example, during one of my visits, a volunteer group came from a church with historical roots in India. Moreover, Faith Farm increasingly partnered with smaller organizations (e.g., churches) that came to the farm, harvested food, and brought the food back to their communities. On one occasion, two African-American men from a church in Baltimore City loaded about 15 bags full of cabbages, which they planned to distribute to members of their community.

In 2017, the farm joined with the Baltimore City government and a community-based organization to bring children from the city to the farm. Bennie played a major role in the initiative and hoped that it would grow and continue into the future. The following is a condensed version of the usual process, as described by Bennie:

[The government] sends a van to a local area community [in Baltimore City] once a week...They bring them [i.e., the children] out...We [i.e., Bennie and the core volunteers] prepare them to go to the field. We stay out there for about an hour or two, harvesting whatever is in season. Then we bring them back, we give them lunch, and we find out where they stand and how they're doing and do some fellowship with them. At the end of the day, they're offered a nature tour, either a 40-minute walk or just one which is only 20 minutes, inside the farm itself...Then everything that they harvest is put on a truck and taken back to their community, not only for their families but everybody that they harvest for in the community.

I observed the aforementioned process on two occasions, and, in both instances, the groups were comprised of African-American children and their adult chaperones. Thus, like City Farm, Faith Farm did not merely hope for community engagement and racial diversity. Rather, the farm seemed to actively promote them.

Antecedents: Deterrents to Volunteering

For this research, I did not deliberately recruit former, dissatisfied volunteers for interviews, nor did I speak with people who never volunteered at the farms. Still, both repeat and first-time volunteers encountered noteworthy challenges that they presented to me in the interviews. Farm leaders also shared their perspectives regarding potential barriers to volunteering.

Severe weather. Interviewees and other volunteers frequently cited severe weather (e.g., rain, extreme heat) as a deterrent or challenge. I also regularly wrote about the effects of weather in my field notes. Maryland's growing season spanned from approximately April to December and included the hottest days of the year. When I interviewed Kay at City Farm, the heat index was over 100 °F, and volunteers were engaged in tasks such as weeding and mulching. Kay was satisfied with her experience volunteering, but she still responded thoughtfully when asked about possible barriers for other people:

Yes, [there are challenges]. Just like not wanting to be exerting too much energy, being out in the heat for the summer is very hard. I definitely would recommend this to somebody in cooler weather...Sunblock, hat, bug spray, all that: if they don't have it, don't come. I think this is not for everybody, that's for sure. But I think it was a fun day, and I think anybody can survive anything that goes for a day.

Similar sentiments were shared by volunteers and farm leaders from all three sites.

For example, Dana noted that the numbers and types of volunteers at Therapy Farm varied throughout the year. During the spring, volunteers tended to be older, whereas younger, heat-tolerant people volunteered more frequently during the summer.

Urban Location. City Farm's second location was in a residential area bordered not only by residences, streets, and businesses but also by plots of land where rowhomes used to stand. In one instance, the city demolished a vacant rowhome while we farmed. Compared to City Farm's main site—as well as Therapy Farm and Faith Farm—this second location attracted more volunteers and passersby from the immediate community. I wrote about interactions with such people in my field notes:

While we were in the fig orchard, two different community members stopped as they were driving by. They both asked what the [fig] trees were. Unfortunately, most of ripe figs had been harvested and taken away already. I attempted...to give one of the passersby a fig.

— Field notes, November 2016

The community atmosphere appealed to interviewees (e.g., Mathew) and attracted a growing number of children and families. Still, as farm leaders told me, the location sometimes deterred volunteers:

Not a lot, but we've definitely had experiences with people who are not from here [i.e., the city] who end up being pretty shocked and appalled by where they are coming to volunteer. A lot of chunks of [where City Farm is located] are not very pretty and very visibly where the legacy of terrible housing policies [persists]. Yes, I think that some people are pretty concerned about—like we've had parents who have had their kids come to volunteer and then said, "No way. We're never letting our kids go back to that area," especially over at [the farm's residential location].

Competing time commitments. At all three farms, retirees and students usually were the most consistent, long-term volunteers. This was evidence of the time commitment that volunteering required. Except in special circumstances—volunteering with a corporate group, receiving permission to volunteer from an employer, or having a flexible work schedule—people with full-time employment seemed to have difficulty volunteering on weekdays:

I had looked at [volunteering at another organization], but they only have hours to sign up for volunteering during weekdays, during business hours, so it's like I can't ever make it out there because I'm working. Things like that, too, having it available on weekends makes it [i.e., volunteering at City Farm] fit into my work schedule better.

— Crystal, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm

Although the volunteers' inconsistency posed potential challenges for farms, farm leaders expressed appreciation for the time that volunteers provided. Farm leaders also appeared to recognize the barriers to volunteering:

I think a lot of people that want to volunteer may not always have the time or the means. Maybe they don't have the transportation at those times when we need them. Maybe they have a spouse that's ill and they can't come or that specific day something might go wrong and they can't come. What we ask though of the volunteers is that [they] call to let us know [when they are not coming] because we depend on them...I just think people's schedules get in the way a lot of times of them wanting to volunteer. Their heart's always in the right place, but not always are the means there.

— Dana, farm leader, Therapy Farm

Physical nature of farming. Therapy Farm's mission was to provide horticultural therapy and education to people of all backgrounds. As such, there was an array of tools and infrastructure to accommodate volunteers with different physical abilities. I noticed this array during my first visit to the farm:

The fields and buildings are generally handicap accessible except when it is rainy [and] muddy. The chickens provide eggs, but they're largely used for therapeutic purposes. The grounds are nicely landscaped, including a sensory garden. And

there are beds constructed with health needs in mind. For example, one raised bed is up in the air, so working with it does not require bending over.

— Field notes, May 2016

Along with the accommodative infrastructure, volunteers at Therapy Farm could perform physically undemanding tasks. In the spring, volunteers leisurely germinated seeds in the greenhouse, whereas decorating wreaths was an option for volunteers in the wintertime.

At Faith Farm, the core volunteers likewise attempted to accommodate volunteers. One morning, we gathered potatoes from the ground and placed them in buckets:

The farm had people come and get the buckets and take them to the trailers. I and others would sometimes carry them ourselves, but this was not necessary. Hence, the children and older people were able to participate without lifting too much weight.

— Field notes, October 2016

The volunteer tasks (e.g., mulching) at City Farm were often labor intensive, but even City Farm tried to facilitate volunteering for people with a range of abilities. For example, a farm leader told me that City Farm had designated times and a trained staff member for groups with special needs—emotional, intellectual, or physical.⁶

Yet, the inherently demanding nature of tasks in the fields could either restrict the number of hours people volunteered or prevent volunteering altogether. Olivia, a first-time volunteer at City Farm said, “It’s kind of physical. So if you’re not used to working physically and especially outside in humidity, that I’m sure, is a huge barrier and may not bring people back.” This deterrent appeared most relevant to City Farm but also pertained

⁶ I did not observe these designated times firsthand, but the farm leader told me that staff members tried to communicate with the groups in advance. Despite this, there were “some challenges because it [was] hard to get a sense over the phone of what the abilities are of a group—especially a group with disabilities.”

to the other two farms: “There were multiple discussions about the difficulty of farm work, with one volunteer mentioning that they could only handle volunteering a couple hours at a time” (Field notes, August 2016, Therapy Farm).

Consequences: Benefits for Volunteers

I identified seven potential benefits of volunteering for volunteers: (1) socially connecting, (2) deriving personal satisfaction, (3) experiencing stress relief, (4) getting exercise, (5) having values changed, (6) learning, and (7) receiving tangible rewards and affirmation. Thus, the benefits overlapped but were not synonymous with volunteers’ reasons for volunteering.

Socially connecting. As noted previously, some people volunteered as a result of their familiarity with a group, but not everyone expected to forge meaningful relationships. For example, Jon knew Carrie—the leader of the group that regularly volunteered at Therapy Farm. He also desired to continue farming after an experience in South America. Nevertheless, volunteering exceeded his expectations with regard to friendships:

I don’t know how much I really expected this, but it’s become a pretty good community of friends. I’m realizing now it’s just good to get involved in those types of things. Like if there are opportunities...for groups that are based around what you’re passionate about, I think it’s always good to take those opportunities because, one, it’s what you’re passionate about and, two, it’s a really good opportunity to form connections.

— Jon, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Even first-time group volunteers benefited from the opportunity to meet other people in their groups. As Kay explained, she “didn’t really know who else was coming, and then [she] met a lot of people, which [was] also a bonus” (first-time group volunteer, City Farm).

Volunteers did not just connect with people within their groups; they also connected with staff members and other volunteers. Vera and Carrie, for instance, formed bonds with staff members at City Farm and Therapy Farm, respectively:

I was the closest one to [a staff member] for a while from my organization because I went [to City Farm] every week...The more I went, the more I had a bond with [him/her], and I get along with [him/her] really well now. We're kind of friends...and it just makes the volunteering in my mind a lot more meaningful and fun and interesting to be able to work with the same people all the time and get that aspect of it.

— Vera, repeat group volunteer, City Farm

[The staff member is] awesome...such a great leader and so feisty, but [s/he] strikes a great balance of motivating us and telling us when we're dilly-dallying but then also really pointing out the good things we did or the things we did well. [S/he] is very appreciative, which is awesome, and we're so appreciative of [him/her].

— Carrie, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Based on my personal experiences, the topics of conversations at the farms were far-ranging and often substantive.⁷ Furthermore, music, food, and playfulness sometimes created a festive atmosphere:

Around 6pm, we took a break, and a cooking demonstration was held. Specifically, a staff member...fed us a salad made with kale, ginger, cranberries, scallions, and vegetable oil. It was delicious! Some people even received seconds. One of the volunteers also threw a football around with the child volunteers.

— Field notes, May 2017, City Farm

As I observed during my own volunteering, the growing albeit imperfect diversity of City Farm impacted the nature of social interactions. In one instance, I—a white male in my late twenties—briefly discussed racial segregation U.S. cities and states with an older, African-American volunteer. We also talked about the relationship between income and participation in specific sports. Afterward, I reflected on the interaction:

⁷ The social facets of volunteers are discussed in Chapter 4 in greater detail.

The pleasant conversation not only was substantive and cordial; it also likely would not occur in most settings. Some cross-demographic dialogue does happen occasionally in academia and at church. But when it happens at a farm—and this certainly was not the first time—it feels especially rewarding.

— Personal reflections, September 2016, City Farm

While meaningful conversations occurred often, the outdoor, task-oriented environments of the farms also appealed to some volunteers:

The first time I came, I had a concern that it was going to be a lot of talk and no action. It didn't turn out to be that way...one thing I like about this place is [there's] a lot of doing.

— Walter, repeat volunteer, City Farm

Carrie described how volunteering at Therapy Farm allowed her and her group to socialize as much or as little as they desired. A tragic incident occurred at her college and elicited difficult emotions among many students—including those who volunteered at Therapy Farm. Immediately after the incident, the group still decided to volunteer, and it turned out to be therapeutic:

The good thing about Therapy Farm was that getting outside and working with your hands—and even if you just need to go plant the arugula silently or harvest something [and] even if you don't want to be talking to the group—that can be helpful and therapeutic in that way, so we didn't have to worry about [it]. I mean we [gave] people the option not to come [after the incident], but most people still came because it was helpful to be outside and work through emotions that way, and we didn't have to worry about bringing our emotional baggage to children [in another volunteer activity], which was a good thing. It can be an outlet sometimes...depending on what's going on with yourself or with the community.

Importantly, based on my research, volunteers did not commonly form strong friendships, nor did that seem to be a frequent expectation. Lionel, for example, enjoyed speaking with staff members and other volunteers, but he lived too far away from City Farm to regularly visit with people near the farm. In my own experience, I spent time outside of the farms with only a small number of volunteers. Still, volunteering conferred

the opportunity to strengthen existing connections and have rewarding interactions with people from various backgrounds. Bennie lauded his experiences at Faith Farm:

You meet different people because all the kids that come out there, even their parents, the grown-ups, I wouldn't have the chance to meet them if it weren't for the farm. So that's another good thing. You're meeting people that...I probably wouldn't have the chance to meet, but by doing something...that door is opening, man, and I'm so thankful.

Deriving personal satisfaction. Most interviewees were repeat volunteers who derived satisfaction from their volunteering. Beverly stated that volunteering “just [made] her feel good” (repeat solo volunteer, City Farm). When asked to characterize his satisfaction with volunteering, Andres was emphatic about his experiences at Therapy Farm: “On a scale of one to 10, 11. I love it.” Jon described volunteering at Therapy Farm as “a breath of fresh air, like literally and figuratively.”

During participant observation, a majority of the volunteers at the farms either appeared to be satisfied or explicitly communicated that they were. Likewise, farm leaders underscored the importance of satisfaction for volunteers:

People come back—groups come back to City Farm every year over and over and are always saying, “I heard about my friend volunteer at City Farm. They loved it. I want to come.” I think people/volunteers do get a wonderful experience almost across the board. I almost never get negative feedback.

— Ariel, farm leader, City Farm

[Volunteers] must obviously like this environment to volunteer if that's what they're going to do, and I think most every volunteer gets a certain self-satisfaction to know that they're doing something that's for good in the community. It's overall a selfless act. People don't get reimbursed or funded for it. They're really doing it out of the goodness of their heart, so I think that takes special people to do it.

— Dana, farm leader, Therapy Farm

In some instances, volunteers' satisfaction appeared to increase during the day. This shift was particularly evident with the children that came from Baltimore City and volunteered with Bennie at Faith Farm:

The difference between the kids' initial impressions of the farm and their actual experiences was striking. The children initially appeared hesitant to get dirty and work in the fields. Yet, by the end of the day many of them had smiles on their faces.

— Personal reflections, July 2017, Faith Farm

Finally, although satisfaction was widespread, it did not appear to be universal at any of the farms. For example, one morning at City Farm, I comfortably harvested carrots inside a hoop house with another solo volunteer. We then joined a group of volunteers, who were outside doing more laborious tasks—mulching the fruit orchard and removing weeds from between the hoop houses: “A few of them [i.e., the volunteers] seemed disinterested, and the others seemed genuinely invested but somewhat tired” (Personal reflections, May 2016, City Farm).

Experiencing stress relief from being outdoors. Many interviewees cited stress relief as an important benefit of volunteering. For Mathew, this relief stemmed from the tasks themselves:

I also really enjoy weed whacking. I enjoy working on the big power tools just because...it's cathartic having that autonomy to just clear a space and...it helps you organize your own thoughts and organize your own world by taking care of a space in a very literal way.

— Mathew, repeat group volunteer, City Farm

Interviewees also valued the farms' outdoor, often attractive environments. Compared to City Farm and Therapy Farm, Faith Farm was situated in a more rural setting. Bennie explained that he sometimes stopped to enjoy the scenery:

It's one of the best therapies around. It's natural; it's clean; it's healthy. It's just so much. It's good for you. I get up to the farm sometimes and I just walk around...I hear the birds and hear the sounds of the farm coming alive.

Some volunteers and staff members likewise touted the landscapes of City Farm and Therapy Farm. According to Andres, Therapy Farm “just looked really pretty when [he] first got there.” A farm leader, Taylor, stated that staff members endeavored to make City Farm aesthetically pleasing:

I think a lot of them [i.e., volunteers] just really relish the opportunity to do some manual labor outdoors. We try and keep things mowed and the flowers around, and things looking nice. Assuming you're not here on a day where it's either flooding or hasn't rained in three weeks, then it generally looks nice here.

Lastly, the farms provided a welcome departure from life's stressful circumstances. As mentioned previously, Carrie's group benefitted from volunteering at Therapy Farm after a tragedy occurred. Yet, volunteers also appreciated a retreat from more mundane situations:

It has a lot to do with the relieving a little bit of stress. It builds up in a week. I get to go out [to City Farm] and do some physical labor and some physical labor that I know is going to do some good for the community. That is like a stress reliever, and at the end of every week, you're just like, “All this stuff, all this stuff. I got to get this done, I got to get this done, I got to get this done,” and then you get out here and just relax, stretch your arms, move your legs. It's relaxing even though it is physically intensive at times. It's meant to be relaxing.

— Lionel, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm

When I was conducting participant observation, I heard other volunteers—in addition to interviewees—laud the opportunity to be outdoors and alleviate stress. Moreover, I personally witnessed and reflected about the scenery at the farms:

The farm here is gorgeous. Weeding [for approximately an hour] in the morning was fairly boring and isolating; but I still gleaned enjoyment from it because I was able to look around and see the butterflies and the bees. The notion of horticultural therapy may seem silly at first, but it is difficult to be here and not believe in it. I have little doubt that visiting the farm can relieve stress.

— Personal reflections, August 2016, Therapy Farm

Getting exercise. While harvesting cabbages at Faith Farm, “I overheard a couple adult volunteers joking that they wouldn’t have to go to the gym that day” (Field notes, October 2016); Andres referred to Therapy Farm as his “replacement gym”; Esther similarly described volunteering at Faith Farm as “a good way to work out a little bit”; Bennie said volunteering helped him lose weight; and after mulching a pathway, digging a trench for a French drain, and shoveling stone at City Farm, I reflected that “if the volunteers wanted exercise, they certainly got it” (Personal reflections, November 2016). Thus, despite rare exceptions such as decorating wreaths, many tasks provided volunteers with exercise.

I personally benefited from exercise while conducting participant observation. My first observation occurred at City Farm on April 2016. The task was preparing plant beds (i.e., bed prep), which involved pulling old plants from the ground, removing staples from the irrigation tape, and rolling up the plastic mulch. Afterward, I wrote that I was “exhausted and tired but fulfilled,” and my “arms [were] sore.” Six months later, following another day preparing plant beds, I was not as tired as I was in April:

In my opinion, bed prep is one of the most laborious tasks on the farm. Pulling out plants, removing the plastic mulch, and shoveling out weeds and dirt can all be exhausting for a person like me—that is, someone not in the best of shape. Nevertheless, while periodic breaks were taken and there were casual mentions of the arduousness of the task, the other volunteers and staff members appeared to be managing well...Even for me, I went to [school] to work in the afternoon and, as such, must’ve not been too tired.

— Personal reflections, October 2016, City Farm

As I discuss later, soreness and exhaustion persisted as consequences through the duration of the research. Yet, over time, my physical fitness improved, and volunteering became less strenuous.

Having values changed. A small number of interviewees stated that volunteering gave them a greater appreciation for and awareness of how food was produced. Beverly, for example, possessed little previous experience with farming. Through volunteering, she discovered that “farming is a lot of work, [and] there’s a lot of preparation involved before you can just put your seed in the ground” (repeat solo volunteer, City Farm). A greater appreciation also motivated Andres to stay healthy and be a more helpful volunteer:

It [i.e., volunteering at Therapy Farm] helped me become aware of where my food comes from...It also helped me realize the difference between the good stuff and the fake stuff. Personally, it just helped me start eating better. I probably try to eat more vegetables than I used to...and personally it has also helped me just...care more about my personal health because being a farmer is fun. It’s like so much work they [i.e. farmers] do, and they just have to put a lot into what they do, and they have to stay healthy, and they have to stay lean, and they have to maintain themselves. It’s helped me think about working out more and just making sure I’m fit to a level where I can actually do the farm work [as a volunteer].

— Andres, repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

Beyond the interviews with volunteers, I overheard “one [volunteer] saying that they’d think more about the labor when buying potatoes from the store” (Field notes, September 2016, Faith Farm). Taylor also observed changes to volunteers’ understandings of food:

A lot of the people who get really heavily invested [e.g., through volunteering...have made a pretty significant decision about their health or their children’s health, things like that, and they want to be much more conscious of that, so this ends up being an important piece of them understanding where their food comes from and how to eat healthfully.

— Taylor, farm leader, City Farm

Moreover, although not every volunteer identified as religious, Christianity’s importance to Faith Farm was unmistakable. On one occasion, a volunteer group from a church after a harvest and sang a hymn titled “I Give You My Heart.” Another time, two

children from a group read the Bible verses in the pavilion area. I did not study in depth the religious impacts of volunteering at Faith Farm, but Bennie said he observed changes among the young volunteers:

[A core volunteer] had asked me to pray but I saw this young lady that was interested...so I asked her to pray us out and she said, "I don't know how to pray." I said, "Just act like none of us is here and it's a personal talk between you and Jesus. Just tell him what you expect, what you've been through today and what is bothering you and what you'd like to see changed." And that's what she did. So that opened up a door for her now to know, "I can go to somebody and speak," and [to know] why something happened...It only takes one [child] to lead the way.

Bennie portrayed the spiritual growth of young volunteers as an ongoing process.

Relatedly, he hoped that, in the future, the groups of children from Baltimore City would be able to volunteer at Faith Farm more frequently.

Learning. The farms' volunteers learned through at least three channels: engaging in tasks; informally conversing with staff members and other volunteers; and partaking in more formal, group-oriented activities (e.g., farm tours). Regarding the former, Andres explained that he learned by finding more efficient ways to perform tasks:

I liked about [every task] we've done because each one was different, and each one made you think about, "What's the best way to do this at a quicker pace?" So it's...thinking outside the box because it would be like, "Oh, is it quicker with gloves or without gloves? Or is it quicker with the utensil or with just my bare hands? Is it quicker with just using one method over the other?"

— Repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm

I similarly gained knowledge by performing tasks themselves. During my second observation at Therapy Farm, I was asked to take inventory of the flowers in the greenhouse. According to my field notes, this "was not the most exciting job in the world, but at least I learned the names of some flowers" (June 2016).

Learning also occurred via conversations at the three farms. For example, from a staff member at Therapy Farm, I learned about tomato hornworms and tobacco mosaic virus, whereas Therapy Farm's volunteers taught me about durians. At City Farm, a staff member and I trellised tomatoes as we discussed the profitability of particular crops and marketing strategies (e.g., farmers' markets).

Additionally, volunteers learned through more formal channels. At the beginning of each volunteer day, a staff member from City Farm usually led a farm tour that typically lasted between 15 and 40 minutes, with the exact amount of time seemingly dependent on various factors (e.g., the number and age of volunteers, volunteers' familiarity with the farm). After a tour in September 2016—for which approximately 10 adult volunteers and 10 children were present—I wrote the following: “The farm tour at the beginning was very well done and thorough. The staff member posed questions and asked the young people to respond...Even though I have received the farm tour several times already, I always learn something new” (Field notes, City Farm).

Therapy Farm's volunteers likewise attended a farm tour, also known as a volunteer orientation. To supplement this tour, prospective volunteers received a handbook with substantial information about the farm and volunteering. The large size of Faith Farm made tours infeasible. However, core volunteers generally provided an overview of the farm, showed a seven-minute video, and instructed volunteers on the day's task. Through this instruction, I discovered that leaving the stem on the zucchini prolonged its shelf life.

Lastly, a small number of volunteers touted the opportunity to be in the community and engage in hands-on learning. When I asked Kay to what extent volunteering influenced policies or had a broader impact, this was her response:

I think it [i.e., volunteering at farms] just educates people on what's being done, what can be done, what we can all do to help and just again like knowing, "Wow, there's a farm here. Wow, look at what they're doing with their food. Wow, look at what kind of response they're getting." ...So I think that it's huge if nothing else just to educate people on what's going on in Baltimore specifically because I feel like we sit in our classes and we can hear all about it, but it's much different experience [in the classroom] than when you get out and you actually see it for yourself and hear from the people who are doing it.

— First-time group volunteer, City Farm

Receiving tangible rewards and affirmation. The tangible rewards for volunteers included the vouchers from City Farm's aforementioned workshare program, food, and celebratory events. Beverly did not know about the workshare program at the time she first volunteered. Still, once she discovered it, she embraced its benefits. I asked Beverly what she would normally say to people to bring them to City Farm, and she responded as follows: "I would encourage them to come on out, be part of the workshare, and learn how to grow your own vegetables. Then also, being a part of the workshare program, you also get food vouchers."

Volunteers sometimes received food from the three farms. At the residential location of City Farm, cooking demonstrations occurred during the weekday volunteer hours. On one occasion, "the staff came with bread, hummus, carrots and strawberry basil jam" (Field notes, May 2017). For the summer of 2017, the farm increased the number of demonstrations to satisfy and attract more community members:

Cooking demonstrations used to be done at the farm every other week; however, this year, they're bringing food every [week], as it's a way to promote socializing. Previously, people would sometimes come [to the farm] on the off weeks and be disappointed by the absence of food.

— Field notes, May 2017, City Farm

Faith Farm invited volunteers to take for themselves a portion of the food they harvested. As well, the farm occasionally provided lunch to volunteers: “I stayed [past the morning] and was kindly offered lunch. They [i.e., the core volunteers] made hamburgers from meat raised on the farm and also had grilled apples, chips, etc. It was delicious” (Field notes, November 2017).

Next, the farms sometimes recognized volunteers via celebratory events. At a community event in December 2016, the CBO that oversaw City Farm named me as one of four Volunteers of the Year for the organization:

The Volunteers of the Year were announced...A couple [CBO] people congratulated and thanked me. I felt undeserving, but it was also heartwarming...When I made it home later that night, I opened the gift bag and was even more astonished. In addition to the gorgeous and hefty bag, there was a multitude of items...It was impressive, and I was overjoyed.

— Field notes, City Farm

The other three Volunteers of the Year engaged in other activities for the CBO—not farming. Thus, the award was not specific to City Farm; rather, it was for the CBO more broadly, and City Farm nominated me to receive it.

Still, despite the tangible rewards that I observed and benefitted from at City Farm, Ariel identified volunteer recognition as an area of improvement:

I think that we could do a better job at celebrating our volunteers....[We could do] more of that [i.e., recognizing volunteers] and happy hour or pot luck or giving away prizes after volunteer events—even sending thank you emails to all of our volunteers regularly...I think mostly people volunteer for the good feeling they get, and so any way that we can improve that, I think, is important.

Therapy Farm also desired to celebrate volunteers more frequently. When I interviewed Dana in the summer of 2017, the farm was already planning a volunteer appreciation day for later in the year:

One of the big things that need to be improved is that we need to provide a means to let the volunteer know that we really appreciate them. This year I'm very adamant about having [a] ...day of recognizing some...volunteers [who were here] in the past, certainly the volunteers that are here now.

In November of 2017, Dana's vision was realized. Therapy Farm hosted a volunteer appreciation event that also included a dedication to a person whom the farm cherished. I estimated that eight to ten volunteers attended, along with staff members and special guests. After the dedication—as well as an eloquent overview of the farm and introductions to the event's guests—we went inside a house, and then we sat around a table and ate salad and sandwiches. The volunteers also received beautiful certificates and bouquets of flowers. I reflected later that I “thoroughly enjoyed and was touched by the event” (Personal reflections, November 2017). Thus, while the farms offered tangible incentives for volunteers, they were not static in this regard; rather, they considered new ways to appreciate and attract volunteers.

Finally, though less concrete than the aforementioned benefits, staff members often provided verbal affirmation to volunteers. In my field notes: I regularly wrote phrases akin to the following: “everyone was thanked warmly for coming” (November 2016, Faith Farm); “I received a lot of affirmation today” (October 2016, Therapy Farm); and “the thankfulness for the volunteers was quite apparent” (August 2016, City Farm).

Consequences: Undesirable Effects of Volunteering

Issues with supervision. Volunteers and staff members appeared to enjoy a majority of the formal and informal social interactions at all three farms. Yet, there were

rare exceptions—as exemplified by the time I arrived to a farm late and soon learned about a challenging interaction between a staff member and a volunteer:

There was visible anxiety and tension stemming from a conflict with one of the staff members; I'm not sure who was at fault or how big of a deal it was. Perhaps the task was being performed incorrectly (as I had done the week before); perhaps the instruction was inadequate; or perhaps there were simply personality differences. In any case, it was both fascinating and disquieting.

— Field notes, August 2016, Therapy Farm

That same day, a majority of people “appeared to be having a nice time” (Personal reflections, August 2016, Therapy Farm); “some of the volunteers played music, and even jokingly danced, while they worked” in the fields (Field notes, August 2016). The aforementioned interpersonal drama, therefore, was problematic but not disastrous.

The exceptions notwithstanding, major interpersonal conflicts were rare. More often, staff members gently corrected volunteers’ mistakes, or volunteers had a close rapport with staff members and received corrections well. As Miranda told me, “[the staff member] is a strong personality, but I get along with [him/her], so it’s not overbearing or anything” (repeat group volunteer, Therapy Farm).

In addition to the compatibility of personalities, the farms’ volunteer models and marketing strategies also seemed to influence social interactions between staff members and volunteers. At City Farm and Faith Farm, conflicts were largely avoided by assigning tasks that, though meaningful, required fewer skills and less precision. Therapy Farm, by contrast, allowed volunteers to perform a variety of tasks, thereby increasing learning opportunities but also magnifying the importance of doing jobs correctly. On one occasion, a staff member told me that I had cut the flowers too long; the stems needed to be shorter. I was also holding the flowers upright, which was incorrect. Afterward, I reflected that these instances of correction were simultaneously unsettling and valuable:

Being corrected...is not enjoyable...It feels much better to hear someone say “you’re awesome,” as was the case last week. That being said, I can understand why it’s necessary to fix bad practices. Not only is that how learning occurs; indeed, it is neat to know that it’s better to hold flowers upside down. But I’m guessing the farm simply cannot afford to have people make too many mistakes...Flowers, in particular, are only marketable when they are close to flawless...As such, Therapy Farm has to be extra careful about how tasks are performed.

— Personal reflections, September 2016, Therapy Farm

A lack of supervision was a related difficulty that volunteers experienced at all three farms. One day at Faith Farm, over 90 young people were volunteering at the farm simultaneously. Consequently, Bennie’s group could not do all of the usual activities:

Unfortunately, the group was not able to see the animals, take a tour, or go on a hike. To an extent, this was probably fine since people seemed to enjoy the lunch so much. Yet, it mostly appeared to be a consequence of having too many group volunteers; none of the core volunteers had the time to lead any of the activities.

— Personal reflections, July 2017, Faith Farm

At City Farm, too, volunteers sometimes needed to be proactive about finding tasks. Walter noted this need during the interview, but as a person who had volunteered in a variety of settings, he perceived the lack of supervision to be common across organizations:

I don’t know that volunteers are their [i.e., staff members’] primary interests. They’re here to do a job. The workers are here to do a job as well. So sometimes you [as a volunteer] have to prod them a little bit to find out what you really need to do. You need to be able to do that. If you’re not the type of person that would do that, you’re going to be, I can imagine, a little bit frustrated.... I have found that with every volunteer group I’ve ever belonged to.

— Walter, repeat small group volunteer, City Farm

Finally, an interviewee from Therapy Farm told me that “as a volunteer, there’s not always enough guidance.” Dana acknowledged this potential challenge for volunteers:

I think we try to let them [i.e., volunteers] know how grateful we are, always trying to[say], “thanks for coming, we really appreciate your help,” making that person feel like hopefully they’re just not wandering around or what the heck, but sometimes they do wander around...and that’s not right. So, I think it’s really important that each person is recognized, that the volunteer knows exactly what it is that is expected of them and what their job is.

— Dana, farm leader, Therapy Farm

Undesirable health impacts. While volunteers at the farms touted volunteering as a valuable source of exercise and stress reduction, they also reported undesirable health impacts such as muscle soreness, exhaustion, itching, sunburn, and splinters. In reference to mulching, Vera said her “arms were so sore for the next week after [she] did that” (repeat group volunteer, City Farm). I witnessed and experienced these effects during the participant observation, and farm leaders commented on the topic as well: “Dad chaperones with groups of students are always hilarious because they love getting out there, and I’m sure all of them wake up with sore backs the next day” (Taylor, farm leader, City Farm).

Notably, variation existed within and across sites, as well as among volunteers. The tasks at City Farm tended to be more labor intensive, creating more opportunities for exercise and also a greater likelihood of soreness. However, the consequence of soreness was evident at all three farms. Following a day placing seeds in the ground and trellising tomatoes at Therapy Farm, I recounted, “My back is a little sore as I write this...I guess that is to be expected after a nearly six-hour day” (Personal reflections, August 2016, Therapy Farm). Furthermore, even when volunteers had similar experiences, the consequences were not necessarily the same. I interviewed Walter after a day preparing plant beds at City Farm. The task was not debilitating for me, but I considered it to be

sufficient exercise. Walter, by contrast, said, “I probably still need to go to the gym today” (repeat small group volunteer, City Farm).

Itchiness was another potential effect, though it was limited to particular tasks. At the residential location of City Farm, removing diseased leaves from the fig trees sometimes induced itching, whereas harvesting zucchinis at Faith Farm could similarly irritate the skin. The itchiness dissipated quickly and was not a lingering issue. Still, the effect was noteworthy.

The three farms attempted to limit the unwanted impacts of doing labor outside. City Farm and Faith Farm regularly provided water and gloves, and the staff members and core volunteers encouraged people to use them. At Therapy Farm, where the tasks were typically less intensive, the staff members still checked to ensure that volunteers were adequately hydrated. Nonetheless, some physical effects were inevitable, as the farms could not control the weather or the inherently laborious nature of farming. For a subset of people, the health impacts of volunteering were undoubtedly problematic. But for volunteers like Lionel, the benefits of volunteering outweighed the detriments:

I'd say it's very satisfying especially—even though I'm doing minor things like weeding, sure it's painful, my back hurts Sundays, my knees hurt, but when I look back and see everything that I've done and look back and think of how it looked when I first started and how it looks when I ended, it's one of those satisfaction pieces where—it's satisfaction.

— Lionel, repeat solo volunteer, City Farm

Discussion

As explicated below, the results reveal that there are unique antecedents and consequences of volunteering in civic agriculture. Variation even exists within and across farms. The research also provides insights into the potential role of civic agriculture in shaping individuals. Some people volunteered at the civic agriculture sites with few

expectations and ended up gaining more from volunteering more than they anticipated. The findings suggest that both individuals and farms should carefully consider the complexities of volunteering. While there are possible benefits, challenges are present as well. Agricultural volunteering may not be the ideal fit for every individual or every farm. Farms can also take practical steps to maximize the satisfaction of volunteers.

Contributions to the Literature

Unique role of civic agriculture. The findings are consistent with previous studies, which indicate that stress reduction is a special benefit of gardening (Hawkins et al., 2011; van den Berg & Custers, 2011). As a qualitative study, the present research illuminates potential pathways for the reduction: doing cathartic, visual tasks (e.g., clearing a space); doing work that is mostly solitary; departing from life's difficulties and routines; and being in an attractive, outdoor environment. The latter pathway is further supported by studies of stress and green spaces (Thompson et al., 2012). While additional research is needed about the effectiveness of agricultural volunteering for stress relief—including investigations about the pathways and the relative magnitude of the relief—this was one of the most striking benefits experienced, observed, and heard about in my research. Similar types of volunteering (e.g., cleaning the environment) may likewise be therapeutic, whereas dissimilar volunteer activities (e.g., hospice care) may exacerbate stress (Claxton-Oldfield, 2015; Pillemer, Fuller-Rowell, Reid, & Wells, 2010). The results of my research also affirm arguments that the benefits of engagement in agriculture and gardening are multifaceted and not just related to the production of food (Poulsen et al., 2014; Poulsen, Neff, & Winch, 2017).

Moreover, universities and organizations are increasingly developing hands-on learning opportunities for students, beginning farmers, and community members (Niewolny et al., 2012; Niewolny & Lillard, 2016). Such efforts to provide formalized training are laudable and also merit further research. Still, the results of the present study indicate that learning and altered values may occur even through less formal activities such as volunteering. Beverly, for example, wanted to learn about Baltimore City, organic foods, and growing vegetables. Via volunteering at City Farm, she also acquired a greater appreciation for the amount of work involved with farming. These results are congruent with research on WWOOFing and other forms of nonwage agricultural labor, as well as studies of consumers at civic agriculture sites (Cox et al., 2008; Miller & Mair, 2015).

Conversely, agricultural volunteers may experience challenges rarely encountered during other volunteer activities. These challenges include severe weather and muscle soreness. As paid farm work is associated with high rates of chronic pain and injuries, the extension of these consequences to agricultural volunteering is not surprising (Wang, Myers, & Layne, 2011; Xiao, McCurdy, Stoecklin-Marois, Li, & Schenker, 2012). However, unlike paid workers, volunteers have the autonomy to avoid or leave farms when challenges are anticipated or arise. On multiple occasions, I saw volunteers leave early due to not feeling well. For paid farm workers, departing early may or may not be an option (Holmberg, Thelin, Stiernstrom, & Svardsudd, 2004).

Regarding social dynamics, agricultural volunteering may be simultaneously unique and unexceptional. As Carrie's story about volunteering after a tragedy demonstrates, volunteering at farms can provide solitude and freedom that other, deeply

social activities (e.g., tutoring students) cannot provide. Even so, the substantive conversations and social connections facilitated by agricultural volunteering may also occur via other types of volunteering (Petrzelka & Mannon, 2006; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Borland, & Lyras, 2013).

An important, albeit inconclusive, finding from my research was that the volunteers' demographics at the three sites were not racially homogenous. City Farm, in particular, endeavored to engage diverse community members in a variety of ways. Even Faith Farm, which was located in a predominately white area, coordinated with Baltimore City Government and city organizations (e.g., churches) to provide food and bring a range of people to the farm (e.g., people of color). In stating this finding, I do not intend to suggest that my research sites were perfectly inclusive, nor do I mean to dismiss criticisms of civic agriculture sites as being “white spaces” (Guthman, 2008, 2017). Rather, my intention is to highlight possible strategies for farms to enhance diversity and create a welcoming atmosphere—such as workshare programs, farm-community partnerships, and targeted recruitment.

Variation within and across civic agriculture sites. At each of the three civic agriculture sites, volunteers' stated reasons for volunteering and the perceived consequences varied. After preparing plant beds at City Farm, I was sufficiently tired, whereas Walter still planned to go to the gym later in the day. Furthermore, at Therapy Farm, I interviewed four individuals from the same group. Yet, despite interviewees having analogous experiences at the farm, the interviews were not identical. Andres had little previous exposure to farming and desired a novel experience, while Miranda worked at a farm in another city and loved being outdoors.

Likewise, notable differences existed among the three farms, with the most conspicuous being the explicitly religious orientation of Faith Farm. Bible verses were displayed in the pavilion area; Faith Farm's core volunteers regularly prayed before and after harvesting; and many of the volunteer groups were religiously affiliated. Neither City Farm nor Therapy Farm had an overtly religious frame.

The variation within and across the three civic agriculture sites substantiates the need to better understand the diversity of volunteering across settings (Wilson, 2012). Large-scale, quantitative surveys yield valuable data, but they also can fail to capture the nuances of volunteers' experiences. Using qualitative methods, I have endeavored to heed Ekers and colleagues' (2015) called "to provide a more socially and spatially textured account of emergent forms of non-waged [agricultural] work" (p. 718).

Practical Implications

Civic agriculture's role in effecting change. Promoting agricultural volunteering as appropriate for everyone was not an end-goal of this research. From the outset, I recognized that there were barriers to volunteering at farms. Nevertheless, the results indicate that the consequences of volunteering may sometimes be unexpected. Interviewees such as Vera and Lionel originally volunteered for social reasons, but they discovered that they enjoyed and were impacted by volunteering more than they envisioned. One implication of this finding is that volunteer opportunities may bring new people to civic agriculture sites and effect broader change by way of the aforementioned consequences (e.g., changed values). The finding is congruent with Thomas Lyson's conception of civic agriculture: "Through active engagement in the food system, civic

agriculture has the potential to transform individuals from passive consumers into active food citizens” (Lyson, 2004, p. 77).

Considerations for farms and individuals. The volunteers I interviewed all expressed satisfaction with their volunteering. Furthermore, during the participant observation, an overwhelming majority of volunteers appeared to be content. The possible benefits included stress relief, learning, and exercise.

However, there were also challenges (e.g., severe weather, unwanted health effects). As my research focused on how volunteering actually occurred and on volunteers with expressible perspectives, I did not interview former volunteers or seemingly dissatisfied volunteers. Future studies should employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the reasons some people volunteer repeatedly at farms and other people do not.

Although my research did not aim to directly compare current and former volunteers, the findings still have practical implications for farms and individuals. Farms that offer volunteering should take steps to maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges of volunteering for volunteers. The following are among the potential steps: (1) on recruitment materials (e.g., websites, fliers), communicate clearly about both the possible benefits and risks associated with volunteering; (2) to the extent possible, ensure that volunteers receive the proper supervision and instruction, including descriptions of how tasks are performed and why; (3) provide tools and water to reduce the likelihood of exhaustion, itchiness, and other unwanted health impacts; (4) within reason, have meaningful but less physically demanding tasks available for volunteers; and (5) express

appreciation for volunteers, especially through verbal affirmation but perhaps also via celebratory events and the provision of food.

Similarly, individuals should judiciously make decisions about volunteering at farms. The first decision is whether they should volunteer at all. This is especially true with regard to work in the fields. Farms can provide ample water and equipment, but many tasks are inescapably challenging and intensive. For example, Faith Farm furnished gloves for volunteers, but harvesting zucchinis still irritated the forearms. Secondly, prospective volunteers must decide which farm is the best fit. As the present research illustrates, not all farms are the same. City Farm was an excellent option for people who wanted exercise, an urban location, or—with regard to the residential site—a community atmosphere; Therapy Farm was probably the best choice for people with physical limitations, a desire to be in a scenic setting, or a wish to quickly accrue service hours; and Faith Farm was the ideal place for volunteers who hoped to harvest crops, obtain and distribute food, or express their Christian faith.

Strengths and Limitations

In addition to the usual tradeoffs associated with qualitative methods—for example, gaining rich, nuanced data but losing statistical generalizability—my research possessed a minimum of three limitations. To begin, I only conducted seven observations at and two interviews from Faith Farm. As the volunteer experience at Faith Farm was more predictable than at the other two sites, I deemed the smaller number of observations sufficient. Also, aside from discussions about religion, the interviews with Bennie and Esther largely resembled the interviews with volunteers from City Farm and Therapy Farm. Nevertheless, more data from Faith Farm would have strengthened the research.

Second, because I had to collect data from multiple sites, I focused primarily on volunteering at the farms, rather than general farm operations. I did not, for example, attend farmers' markets, nor did I interview the farms' customers. The data collected were appropriate given the aims of the research, but I may have missed intricacies about the three sites.

Finally, I asked farm leaders about seasonal differences in volunteering. However, all of my observations occurred between April and December. As such, I may not have fully captured the antecedents and consequences of volunteering between January and March (i.e., outside of Maryland's growing season).

The research also had several strengths. First, I gathered an abundance of data from three sites, thereby enabling me to compare and contrast the antecedents and consequences of agricultural volunteering in different settings. Next, I employed multiple methods and interviewed both farm leaders and volunteers. Thus, the research entailed both methods triangulation and data source triangulation (Patton, 1999). The participant observation yielded data about how volunteering actually occurred, whereas the interviews elicited information that was mainly unobservable (e.g., volunteers' stated motivations). Finally, the qualitative methods allowed me to explore the complex antecedents and consequences of volunteering at the three farms—with the ultimate goal of addressing gaps in the literature and reaching “transferable” conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Conclusions

To summarize, I conducted 19 interviews and approximately 190 hours of participant observation at three non-profit farms in Maryland. The expressed reasons for

volunteering included social connections, personal values, and the desire to learn about farming or obtain exercise. Another noteworthy antecedent was farms' promotion of community engagement and diversity. Severe weather and the physical nature of farming were among the potential deterrents of volunteering. Regarding consequences, volunteering seemingly offered stress relief, exercise, education, and socialization, among other benefits. However, difficulties also existed, such as issues with supervision and adverse health effects (e.g., muscle soreness). Some antecedents and consequences may be unique to civic agriculture, while others (e.g., socialization) may be common to other volunteer activities (Petrzelka & Mannon, 2006; Welty Peachey et al., 2013). Individuals should carefully consider whether agricultural volunteering is the right fit for them and, if so, which farm would be most suitable. Farms should enhance volunteers' satisfaction by expressing appreciation for volunteers and providing the proper equipment and supervision.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

The themes from the dissertation are summarized in Figure 7.1 below. In Chapter 4, I explored the critique that civic agriculture lacks community (DeLind, 1999; Pole & Grey, 2013). Previous research found that many CSA customers did not prioritize volunteering or feel connected to the farm's community (Pole & Grey, 2013). DeLind (1999) also expressed frustration with CSA customers' unwillingness to help farmers. With a focus on relationships among volunteers and staff members at three non-profit farms, I concluded that the sense of community was neither completely lacking nor fully present in this aspect of civic agriculture. The substantive conversations, social connections, interactions with passersby, and sense of a common purpose strengthened feelings of community at the farms. These findings, therefore, support Lyson's (2004) vision of a civic agriculture that "bridge[s] economic, social, cultural, and political life" (p. 28). The results also resonate with Tocqueville's (1840/2003) view that public associations may stimulate compassion and unite people behind a common cause. Nevertheless, the feelings of community at the three research sites were dampened by the high volunteer and staff turnover, the distant origins of some volunteers, and the solitary nature of certain tasks.

Chapter 4 also addressed a second critique of civic agriculture—that is, that it cannot adequately address food insecurity, and it should not be looked to as a potential solution to this problem. Guthman, Morris, and Allen (2006) collected data from managers of farmers' markets and CSA programs. The data showed that civic agriculture sites attempted to address food insecurity a variety of ways (e.g., donating leftover food).

PAPER	AIMS/QUESTIONS	BENEFITS/SUPPORT	CHALLENGES/QUESTIONS
<p>Chapter 4 <i>Volunteering and civic agriculture: Tocqueville and Polanyi vis-à-vis community building and food security at three Maryland farms</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the critique that civic agriculture lacks community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantive conversations • Social connections formed • Interactions with passersby • Sense of common purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer and staff turnover • Distant origins of volunteers • Solitary tasks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the critique that civic agriculture cannot or should not address food insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse strategies • Indirect contributions • Harvesting, distribution, and reception of food by volunteers • Enhancement of food insecurity not the only goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing goals for farms • Insufficient scale of food production, especially at City Farm and Therapy Farm • Continued uncertainty about government's role
<p>Chapter 5 <i>“It’s not going to be free labor”: The complex role of volunteering in achieving farms’ missions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the ways that volunteers can contribute to or detract from the achievement of farms’ missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A critical mass for labor • Competence and dedication • Filling of labor needs • Enhancement of farms’ financial well-being • Part of farms’ mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for supervision of volunteers by staff • Need for scheduling and lack of reliability • Volunteers’ inefficiency and errors • Desire to volunteer at inopportune times
<p>Chapter 6 <i>“It’s one of the best therapies around”: The antecedents and consequences of volunteering for volunteers at three Maryland Farms</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons for, as well as potential deterrents to, volunteering at three civic agriculture sites in Maryland? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal connections • Exercise • Personal values • Learning about farming • Previous experiences with farming and gardening • Outdoor activity • Professional and educational development • Romanticization of farming • Race and community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe Weather • Urban location of City Farm • Competing time commitments • Physical nature of farming
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the desirable and undesirable consequences of volunteering for volunteers at three civic agriculture sites in Maryland? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially connecting • Deriving personal satisfaction • Experiencing stress relief from being outdoors • Getting exercise • Having values changed • Learning • Receiving tangible rewards and affirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with supervision • Undesirable health impacts

Figure 7.1. Summary of results. This figure shows the main themes from the three papers. Chapter 5’s exploration of the scope of volunteers’ tasks is not shown.

However, farmers' modest incomes precluded them from doing more to help (Guthman et al., 2006). The three non-profit farms in my case study similarly employed creative strategies for enhancing food access. City Farm collaborated with organizations, offered a workshare program, operated a mobile market, and donated a portion of the produce. Faith Farm forged partnerships and gave away close to two million pounds of food each year. Still, combating food insecurity was not the only goal at any of the farms. Other missions included educating community members about farming and promoting socialization among diverse groups of people.

The aims of Chapter 5 were as follows: (1) describe the scope of tasks that volunteers may perform at three distinct farms in and around Baltimore, Maryland; and (2) explore the ways that volunteers can contribute to or detract from the achievement of farms' missions. Faith Farm's casual volunteers mainly engaged in harvesting, but volunteers' tasks at City Farm and Therapy Farm were wide-ranging. Volunteers' contributions included forming a critical mass for labor and being competent and dedicated. However, staff members—or the core volunteers at Faith Farm—also needed to schedule and supervise volunteers, which entailed expending time and effort. Furthermore, Volunteers could make mistakes or work slowly.

These findings are generally consistent with previous studies (see e.g., Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, & Dale, 2015; Terry, 2014). My research is, however, unique in that I used a multiple-case study to explore the complex ways that volunteers advanced and were inextricably linked to the non-profit missions of the farms (Yin, 2014). Akin to the gleaners in Hoisington et al.'s (2001) research, the volunteers at Faith Farm grew and donated an abundance of food. City Farm's and Therapy Farm's volunteers contributed in

other ways—for example, making field trips possible or indirectly supporting the horticultural therapy. Volunteers may currently or potentially be vital to other civic agriculture sites throughout the United States (Dimitri, Oberholtzer, and Pressman, 2016).

Yet, the three farms did not merely benefit from volunteering. Rather, staff members sacrificed their own productive time in order to educate, supervise, and socialize with volunteers. Thus, the dynamic appeared similar to what Merrell (2000) observed in women’s health clinics: volunteers and the organizations pursued a “balance between giving and taking” (Merrell, 2000, p. 37).

Finally, Chapter 6 examines the antecedents and consequences for the farms’ volunteers. Interpersonal connections, learning about farming, exercise, and professional development were among volunteers’ reasons for volunteering, whereas severe weather, competing commitments, and the physical nature of farming were three potential deterrents. The desirable consequences included stress relief, social connections, satisfaction, learning, and tangible rewards and affirmation. Still, I also experienced, observed, and heard about minor undesirable health effects (e.g., splinters, sunburn) and issues with supervision. The role of race and community engagement was also addressed in this chapter. The three farms did not perfectly reflect diversity, but they all attempted to attract people from different backgrounds (e.g., people of color, individuals of all ages and abilities).

The results of Chapter 6 suggest that volunteer opportunities may draw new people to agriculture, thereby generating the potential for broader change. The findings are also in line with the assertion that civic agriculture’s benefits are multifarious

(Poulsen et al., 2014; Poulsen, Neff, & Winch, 2017); the benefits are not simply related to the production and distribution of food.

A cross-cutting finding from the dissertation is that farms are sundry and ever-changing places. Over the course of data collection—which occurred between April 2016 and November 2017—the farms made numerous changes. City Farm increased the value of three hours of volunteering with the workshare program; Faith Farm partnered with Baltimore City Government; and Therapy Farm added an emphasis on education. Relatedly, the farm leaders I interviewed recognized many of the challenges for volunteers, as well as opportunities for improvement. For example, a farm leader at Therapy Farm, Dana, told me about the desire to host a volunteer appreciation day. That desire was fulfilled later in the year. By stating this finding, I do not mean to suggest that civic agriculture sites are irreproachable. Instead, my intention is to stress the value of the qualitative methods and to acknowledge that people and organizations are dynamic but never perfect.

Implications

The dissertation's practical implications for farms and volunteers are detailed in other chapters. Nonetheless, I concisely summarize these implications below. Moreover, I elucidate the significance of the research for public health.

Implications for farms

The three non-profit farms used innovative strategies that may serve as models for other civic agriculture sites. City Farm's workshare program, cooking demonstrations, and farm tours promoted community engagement and created educational opportunities. Therapy Farm's infrastructure, aesthetics, and products (e.g., flowers, wreaths) enabled

people of all ages and abilities to volunteer. The core volunteers at Faith Farm were mostly retirees from non-farming professions. Yet, Faith Farm also developed relationships with churches, schools, businesses, community-based organizations, and Baltimore City Government. These strategies may not be appropriate for every setting, but I hope some farms find them worthy of imitation.

Hosting volunteers may not be apt and desirable for all non-profit farms. Even so, farms that offer volunteering should carefully reflect upon their labor needs and assets and then decide the best way to handle the scheduling of people available and willing to serve as volunteers. City Farm's predetermined volunteer hours, Therapy Farm's flexible scheduling, and Faith Farm's reliance upon volunteer groups each had advantages and disadvantages. For instance, the staff members at City could anticipate the presence of volunteers and prepare tasks in advance, but the set volunteer hours also increased the difficulty of tailoring tasks to volunteers' abilities and preferences. Moreover, while Faith Farm was able to accommodate large volunteer groups, smaller farms may not have been able to supervise so many people at once.

Despite the potential benefits of agricultural volunteering for volunteers and farms, possible challenges exist as well. As such, farms should take steps to ensure volunteers' expectations are realistic and satisfaction is maximized. The steps include the following: (1) communicate clearly about what volunteering entails; (2) carefully demonstrate how tasks should be performed; (3) provide the appropriate tools and water; (4) to the extent possible, have meaningful but less laborious tasks available for volunteers; and (5) express appreciation for volunteers. In addition to increasing

satisfaction, these steps could result in volunteers contributing more time (Finkelstein, 2008).

Implications for Volunteers

Volunteering at farms has numerous potential benefits but may not be the best choice for all individuals. Many farm tasks are unavoidably labor intensive, and uncontrollable circumstances (e.g., severe weather) can also pose difficulties. People who decide to volunteer should engage in careful consideration of a farm's suitability. As this dissertation illustrates, volunteers' experiences vary within and across civic agriculture sites. City Farm, for example, was the ideal location for volunteers who wanted physical activity, whereas Therapy Farm was probably a better option for people who desired less strenuous tasks.

Implications for Public Health

In recent years, scholars have increasingly called for a systems-level approach to improving public health. Story, Hamm, and Wallinga (2009) wrote that "public health dietary guidelines and obesity prevention cannot be met without a focus on the food system, from field to fork" (p. 222). In an official policy statement, the American Public Health Association (APHA, 2007) "urge[d] the public health community to increase its engagement in food system issues and to educate policymakers; media; food industry; and public health, nutrition, and environmental professionals about public health issues and solutions associated with the food system" (para. 46). Via an exploratory case study of three Maryland farms, I attempted to heed these calls.

Specifically, the dissertation addresses five issues with widely recognized relevance to public health: (1) food security, (2) physical activity, (3) social relationships

and community, (4) stress relief, and (5) workplace hazards (Lomas, 1998; Murphy, 1996; Olson, 1999; Waller, 1994; Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006). The research also explores another topic that cannot be extricated from public health—agricultural labor (APHA, 2007).

As my research was exploratory and more studies are needed on the topic, I cannot estimate the magnitude of health benefits or detriments associated with agricultural volunteering. Nonetheless, public health professionals should consider farms possible sites for nutrition education, food provision, community building, exercise, and stress reduction—with volunteering as a specific pathway (see e.g., Brown & Jameton, 2000; Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015).

Broader Implications

The findings from this research largely support the perspectives of Tocqueville (1840/2003), Polanyi (1957/2001), Gibson-Graham (2006), and Lyson (2004). The farms were marked by meaningful interactions and a shared purpose; the staff members' and volunteers' activities (e.g., donating food) evidenced a concern for other people's welfare; the volunteers often engaged in productive labor; and some volunteers stated that volunteering gave them a greater appreciation for the origins of their food—perhaps making them more informed “food citizens” (Lyson, 2004, p. 77).

Still, questions remain. How, for example, should the terms “civic” or “community” be defined vis-à-vis agriculture? Do the terms demand a precise definition? Also, regarding Lyson's (2004) belief that “citizen participation in agriculture and food-related organizations and associations is a cornerstone of civic agriculture,” are there differences among types of participation (pp. 76-77)? For example, to what extent are the

antecedents and consequences of engagement different for volunteers than for customers? Although my dissertation points to answers, these questions merit further research and debate.

Directions for Future Research

Along with seeking answers to the abovementioned questions, I recommend the following directions for future research:

- Better quantify the number of volunteers at civic agriculture sites, as well as the hours contributed.¹
- Compare and contrast the roles of—and conditions for—different categories of laborers (e.g., volunteers, interns, apprentices, AmeriCorps members, WWOOFers).
- Characterize the inter-organizational networks of farms, with a particular focus on voluntary efforts to combat food insecurity (see e.g., Popp, MacKean, Casebeer, Milward, & Lindstrom, 2013).²
- Quantify the magnitude of stress relief and physical activity that results from volunteering at farms.
- Explore the reasons people discontinue their volunteering at farms. Such reasons may or may not be related to volunteers' original motivations for volunteering (Willems et al., 2012).³

¹ Ekers, Levkoe, Walker, and Dale (2015) conducted an online survey of farms in Ontario, Canada. The survey did not capture the number of hours contributed, nor was the sample representative. Still, the findings regarding dependence on non-wage labor were insightful, and similar surveys could be done in other settings.

² Ideally, I would have interviewed leaders from Faith Farm's collaborators (e.g., churches, food banks). However, this was beyond the scope of the dissertation.

³ Willems and colleagues (2012) conducted research with current and former volunteers with a youth organization in Belgium. In addition to mismatches between original motivations and experiences (e.g., no

- Examine the prevalence and severity of agricultural volunteering’s undesirable health effects (e.g., sunburn, itchiness).

These suggestions are not comprehensive. Given the nascence of the literature about non-wage agricultural labor, researchers may conduct studies with an array of methods, research questions, and settings.

Strengths and Limitations

The qualitative methods and multiple-case study approach necessarily involved trade-offs (Yin, 2014). I obtained rich detail about the three farms but lost statistical generalizability. Yet, even within the context of qualitative research, my dissertation possessed at least four limitations.

First, I conducted participant observation during nine months of the year—that is, April through December. While I asked farm leaders about seasonality, I may have missed intricacies related to volunteering in January, February, and March.⁴ Next, I endeavored to recruit a diverse sample of volunteers to be interviewed. This effort proved moderately successful, but older volunteers’ and African-Americans’ perspectives were underrepresented. Third, I conducted fewer observations and interviews at Faith Farm than at City Farm and Therapy Farm. I quickly learned that casual volunteers’ experiences at Faith Farm were more straightforward; they primarily assisted with harvesting. Faith Farm’s two interviewees also addressed similar themes as the other interviewees. Still, though data saturation was largely achieved, interviewing more volunteers from Faith Farm could have allowed me to explore some topics (e.g., charity,

longer undergoing personal growth), volunteers quit volunteering due to personal characteristics (e.g., age), organizational factors (e.g., a lack of supervision), and a desire or need to devote time to other activities.

⁴ Casual volunteering continued at City Farm year-round. Therapy Farm was open to the public every month except January.

religion) in greater depth (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Finally, I may have missed nuances about farm operations, as I was unable to completely immerse myself into one location (Yin, 2014).

The dissertation also possessed several strengths. I collected an abundance of data from three farms, employed multiple methods, and interviewed both farm leaders and volunteers. Thus, I was able to compare and contrast agricultural volunteering across contexts (Yin, 2014). I also performed both methods triangulation and data source triangulation (Patton, 1999). Furthermore, I adapted the conceptual framework from Snyder and Omoto's (2008) Volunteer Process Model; this framework augmented the cohesiveness of the research, while also allowing unexpected findings to emerge.

Final Conclusions

In sum, this dissertation involved a case study of agricultural volunteering at three non-profit farms in Maryland. I explored the critiques and theoretical foundations of civic agriculture (Chapter 4), the ways volunteers contributed to or detracted from farms' missions (Chapter 5), and the antecedents and consequences of volunteering for volunteers (Chapter 6). Volunteering appeared to offer important benefits for communities, farms, and individuals—including the provision of food to individuals and organizations, the advancement of farms' missions, and exercise and stress relief for volunteers. Yet, challenges also existed. The farms experienced high staff and volunteer turnover; volunteers could work slowly or counterproductively; and there were undesirable health impacts. Researchers, farms, prospective volunteers, public health professionals, and community-based organizations should work together to ensure that the benefits of volunteering are maximized for all parties.

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APPENDIX

Data Collection Materials

Sample Interview Questions for Volunteers

What were the reasons that you started volunteering here at [case study site]?

Probe: When did you first volunteer?

Probe: Were you asked by someone to volunteer?

Probe: Did you look at any media content such as the farm website or Facebook page?

Probe: Can you describe any previous experiences you had with farming or gardening?

Probe: What values might have influenced your decision to volunteer? (e.g., environmentalism, supporting farmers, building community)

Probe: Did you consider volunteering at other farms? What made [case study site] the choice?

Probe: What activities of [case study site] most appealed to you?

How are you engaged as a volunteer (or intern) here at [case study site]?

Probe: How frequently do you volunteer?

Probe: What are the sorts of tasks that you normally perform?

Probe: Are there tasks that you don't perform?

Probe: What does a typical day as a volunteer look like?

Probe: Did you consider volunteering at other farms? What made [case study site] the choice?

Probe: What were you hoping to gain personally from the experience?

Probe: How have your experiences compared to your original expectations?

Probe: (If applicable) Have you been to the other farm site(s)? How often? How does that one compare to here?

Probe: (If applicable) How would you compare the role of interns to the role of other volunteers?

What do you believe have been the impacts of your volunteering here at [case study site]?

Probe: How has volunteering affected you personally?

Probe: Have you noticed any changes in your connection to food?

Probe: Has there been an impact on your social life?

Probe: What contributions have you made to [civic agriculture site]?

Probe: How do you think your contributions compare to the contributions of staff members?

Probe: How has your volunteering impacted the surrounding community?

To what extent do you think volunteering at places like [case study site] influences policies?

Probe: What about for you personally? To what extent is your volunteering here motivated by a desire to change how the world works?

Probe: To what extent do you consider yourself part of a food movement?

What are the challenges with volunteering at [case study site]?

Probe: How surprising were the challenges when you first encountered them?

Probe: What might keep someone from being able to volunteer here at [case study site]?

How do you feel about not being paid (or being paid modestly) for doing farm work?

How would you characterize your level of satisfaction with volunteering here at [case study site]?

Do you have recommendations for how to improve volunteering at [case study site]?

How likely is it that you will volunteer again at [case study site]?

Would you recommend volunteering here or at similar locations to other people?

Finally, are you engaged in volunteer activities outside of [case study site]? If so, can you tell me more about that?

Probe: How do your experiences with these other activities compare with your experiences here at [case study site]?

Is there anything we haven't discussed yet that you'd like to mention?

Sample Interview Questions for Farm Leaders

To start, can you provide an overview of [case study site]?

Probe: How did it start?

Probe: What is the mission?

Probe: What are the programs?

Probe: What happens to the items that are grown?

Probe: Where is it located?

What is your role here at [case study site]?

Probe: How long have you been working here?

Probe: To what extent do you interact with volunteers?

What does volunteering look like here at [case study site]?

Probe: How often do people volunteer?

Probe: What types of people volunteer? (What about people who don't volunteer?)

Probe: In what ways is volunteering promoted by [case study site]? For example, do you use websites or social media?

Probe: How satisfied are you with the number of volunteers that you currently have?

Probe: What does a typical volunteer day look like?

Probe: What tasks do volunteers typically perform? Are there tasks that are primarily done by paid staff?

Probe: How are decisions made about what tasks volunteers do?

Probe: To what extent are there seasonal differences in what volunteering looks like at [case study site]?

How do you feel volunteers fit in with the mission of [case study site]?

Probe: Do volunteers help to advance the mission? Or is volunteering an inherent part of the mission?

Probe: What are the reasons for not hiring more paid staff to replace volunteers?

What appear to be the main reasons that people volunteer at [case study site]?

Probe: Approximately how many people come with a group? (What about with someone they know? What about on their own?)

Probe: What types of groups volunteer at [case study site]?

Probe: What skills or credentials do volunteers often want to get?

Probe: What values, beliefs, or priorities seem to be related to volunteering?

What do you believe are the impacts of volunteers here at [case study site]?

Probe: How does volunteering impact the volunteers themselves?

Probe: How do volunteers impact [case study site]?

Probe: How do the contributions of volunteers compare to the contributions of staff members?

Probe: How do volunteers at [civic agriculture site] impact the surrounding community?

Probe: To what extent do volunteers at places like [case study site] impact policies?

What are some common challenges for volunteers at [case study site]?

Probe: What circumstances might keep someone from volunteering at [case study site]?

Similarly, what are some common challenges for [case study site] when it comes to volunteers?

Probe: How challenging is it to meet volunteers' expectations?

How might volunteering at [case study site] or similar places be improved?

What would you say to anyone who might be thinking about volunteering at [case study site]?

What would you say to any farm that might be thinking about having volunteers?

Have you worked with—or provided oversight of—volunteers anywhere else besides <case study site>? If so, what makes <case study site> unique or similar when it comes to volunteering?

Is there anything we haven't discussed yet that you'd like to mention?

EDUCATION

2006-2009 <i>Summa cum Laude</i>	University of South Florida Major: Psychology Minor: Public Health	B.A.
2009-2012	University of South Florida, Dept. of Anthropology Concentration: Biocultural Medical Anthropology	M.A.
2010-2012 <i>Summa cum Laude</i>	University of South Florida, College of Public Health Department of Family and Community Health Concentration: Health Education	M.P.H.
2013-2018	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Department of Health, Behavior and Society	Ph.D.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

I am fascinated by U.S. food systems and their impacts on human health. My specific areas of interest include the following: the extent to which farms can and should engage surrounding communities, especially members of disadvantaged groups; strategies to address food insecurity; conditions for the agricultural workforce in the United States, including volunteers, beginning farmers, “WWOOFers,” and hired farmworkers; the impacts of and potential for various scales of the food system (e.g., urban, regional); and the benefits and drawbacks of direct marketing strategies (e.g., community supported agriculture). Methodologically, I have expertise in qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

April 2016-Present	Dissertation Research	Co-PI
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With the aim of exploring the antecedents, experiences, and consequences of volunteering, I am conducting a multiple-case study of three Maryland farms: an urban community farm, a horticultural therapy center, and a volunteer-run farm. I performed 62 observations totaling more than 190 hours. I also interviewed 16 volunteers and three farm leaders.

January 2016-February 2016	CERSI Project	Graduate Research Assistant
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I assisted with the qualitative analysis of e-cigarette patent applications.

September 2015-October 2015	SESYNC Workshop	Graduate Research Assistant
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I collected and synthesized information related to climate change impacts and crop production in Ethiopia.

May 2014-February 2015 Center for a Livable Future Graduate Research Assistant

I gathered data pertaining to the agricultural workforce, particularly workers involved in industrial food animal production (IFAP). Data sources included the Census of Agriculture and the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS). I also prepared samples of turkey to be sent for chemical analysis.

February 2014-May 2015 EFSNE Project Volunteer Research Assistant

As part of a larger project, I assisted with the qualitative analysis of focus group data. The questions were about the advantages and drawbacks of regional food systems. A manuscript is currently being prepared for publication.

September 2011-August 2013 Villages Assessment Graduate Research Assistant

This was a large-scale, three-phase study conducted at The Villages, an age-restricted retirement community in Florida. The first phase involved three stages of formative focus groups. The second phase entailed a community-wide survey completed by over 33,000 older adults. Finally, for the third phase, member validation was performed via additional focus groups.

During phase 1, I assisted with coding transcripts and codebook development. I subsequently was involved with manuscript preparation, survey dissemination, quantitative data cleaning and management, grant development, and codebook organization, among other duties. For phase 3, I co-led the qualitative coding effort, training co-workers how to code, develop a codebook, and use NVivo. Additionally, I served as a note taker and recruited and consented participants.

June 2011-December 2012 Master's Thesis Research Co-Principal Investigator

For my master's thesis, participant observation, surveys, and semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit the perceptions of staff members, CSA members, and volunteers at Sweetwater Organic Community Farm. Views regarding community supported agriculture and organic agriculture were of particular interest.

November 2008-April 2009 TIPPS Project Undergrad. Research Assistant

This study aimed to examine the social and emotional contexts of bullying among fourth and fifth grade students. I assisted with data cleaning and analysis, reviewed the academic literature, and helped develop a report for public schools.

August 2007-May 2008 LINK Study Undergrad. Research Assistant

This study of parents and their children focused on diet, physical activity, and work-family conflict. I administered surveys; helped employ anthropological methods; assisted with recruitment; maintained contact information; and cleaned and entered data.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2017 Graduate Teaching Assistant, *Baltimore Food Systems: A Case Study of Urban Food Environments* (3rd term course), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.
- 2016 Graduate Teaching Assistant, *Baltimore Food Systems: A Case Study of Urban Food Environments* (3rd term course), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.
- 2015 Graduate Teaching Assistant, *Concepts in Qualitative Research for Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2nd term course), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.
- 2015 Graduate Teaching Assistant, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* (Summer Institute course), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.
- 2014 Graduate Teaching Assistant, *Food Production, Public Health, and the Environment* (2nd term course), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- Palmer, A., Santo, R., Berlin, L., Bonnano, A., Clancy, K., Giesecke, C., Hinrichs, C., Lee, R., McNab, P., & Rocker, S. (2017). Between global and local: Exploring regional food systems from the perspectives of four communities in the U.S. Northeast. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 7(4), 187-205.
- Poulsen, M., McNab, P., Clayton, M., & Neff, R. (2015). The impact of urban agriculture on food security in low-income countries: A systematic review. *Food Policy*, 55, 131-146.
- Tyler, S., Corvin, J., McNab, P., Fishleder, S., Blunt, H., & VandeWeerd, C. (2014). "You can't get a side of willpower": Nutritional supports and barriers to healthy eating in The Villages. *Journal of Nutrition in Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 33(2), 108-125.

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

- McNab, P. (2017, June). The complex role of volunteering in achieving farms' goals: A multiple case study in Maryland. Presented at the meeting of ASFS/AFHVS, Los Angeles, CA.
- McNab, P. (2016, June). Volunteering and civic Agriculture in Maryland: Antecedents, experiences, and consequences. Presented at the meeting of ASFS/AFHVS/CAFS, Toronto, ON.
- VandeWeerd, C, Fishleder, S., Tyler, S., McNab, P., & Corvin, J. (2014, November). Perceptions of safety in an active retirement community. Presented at the meeting of the American Public Health Association, New Orleans, LA.
- VandeWeerd, C, Corvin, J., Tyler, S., McNab, P., Fishleder, S., & Petersen, D. (2013, November). Nutrition in late life: Dietary habits, food security and social support in an active senior community. Presented at the meeting of the Gerontological Society of America, New Orleans, LA.
- VandeWeerd, C., Corvin, J., Tyler, S., McNab, P., Siegel, K., Fishleder, S., & Petersen, D. (2013, November). Nutrition in late life: Identifying risks and benefits in an active retirement community. Presented at the meeting of the American Public Health Association, Boston, MA.
- VandeWeerd, C., Corvin, J., Sharkey, S., Rodriguez, M., Rosen, D., McNab, P., Solomon, M., Agu, N., Rella, N., Rose, M., & Petersen, D. (2012, October). Models for healthy aging: Becoming America's healthiest hometown. Presented at the meeting of the American Public Health Association, San Francisco, CA.
- McNab, P. (2012, March). Sweetwater Organic Farm: A study of organic and community supported agriculture. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Baltimore, MD.
- Pace, C., McNab, P., & Tyler, S. (2012, March). Gardening at USF: Perceptions and nutritional needs. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Baltimore, MD.
- Chan, I., Ahmed, N., Kline, N., Novicki, E. K., McNab, P., & Timmons, C. (2011, March). Future health care professionals' familiarity with and impression of reform. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Seattle, WA.
- Rapp, M., Meredith, A., & McNab, P. (2011, April). Transportation behavior and perceptions of college students: A case study of the University of South Florida. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Seattle, WA.

Araujo, M., Johnson, M., Kline, N., McNab, P., & Nupp, R. (2010, March). Health provider perceptions of migrants: Implications for migrant health. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Mérida, Mexico.

OTHER SELECTED WORKS

McNab, P. (2012). *“Planting wholesome seeds”*: Organic farming and community supported agriculture at Sweetwater Organic Community Farm (Master’s thesis). Retrieved from Graduate School Theses and Dissertations. <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/4370/>

McNab, P. (2012). Effective leadership to alter school food environments and improve public health. *Florida Public Health Review*, 9, 31-35.

Castañeda, H., Kline, N., Rapp, M., Demetriou, N., Ahmed, N., Chan, I., Crocker, T., Dickey, N., Dillon, P., Dotson, H., Frost, J., Hobbs, N., Novicki, E. K., McNab, P., Montiel-Ishino, F., & Timmons, C. (2011). Assessing the 2010 Affordable Care Act: Perspectives of future health care professionals. *Practicing Anthropology*, 33(4), 44-48.

RELEVANT SKILLS

Qualitative data analysis; interviewing; participant observation; survey administration; study recruitment; grasp of theories and approaches from multiple disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology); grant writing; data management; NVivo, MAXQDA, HyperRESEARCH, SPSS, Stata, EndNote, MS Excel, MS Word, and MS PowerPoint; IRB submission

HONORS AND AWARDS

2013-2017	Center for a Livable Future-Lerner Fellowship, Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
2016	Volunteer of the Year, Community-Based Organization, Baltimore, MD
2016	Dissertation Enhancement Award (\$2,000), Center for Qualitative Studies in Health and Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
2015	Doctoral Distinguished Research Award (\$1,757); Department of Health, Behavior and Society; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
2010	Student Honorary Award for Research and Practice (\$750), University of South Florida College of Public Health
2006	Florida Academic Scholars Award, Bright Futures (100% tuition)
2006	Presidential Scholars Award (\$10,000), University of South Florida
2006	Honors College Scholarship (\$2,000), University of South Florida
2006	AP Scholar with Distinction

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2014-2016 *Student Coordinator*, Center for Qualitative Studies in Health and
Medicine
2014-2015 Co-coordinator, CLF-Lerner Fellowship Journal Club
2009-2010 *Vice-President*, Anthropology Graduate Student Organization,
University of South Florida

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2018-Present American Public Health Association
2016-Present Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society
2009-Present Society for Applied Anthropology