To Think Like an Agroecologist: The Greenhorns and New Agrarian Rhetoric

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Abstract

The concept of agrarianism has a deep history in the United States. Beginning with Thomas Jefferson's vision of an ideal society comprised of yeoman farmer citizens, agrarianism's implications and uses have evolved over time. Initially an ideology of U.S. American settler colonialism, agrarianism was taken up in later decades by farmers themselves in social movements. In recent decades, agrarian ideology has taken another turn towards agricultural sustainability in what scholars and activists call "new" agrarianism. New agrarianism is concerned with the wellbeing of the entire living system and has shifted towards an ideology that anyone can apply to their lives. Capturing the character and significance of the discursive transformation of agrarianism is an open scholarly project that this dissertation aims to join. I examine how one social movement organization, the Greenhorns, enters into this discourse and uses agrarianism in their efforts to support the movement for sustainable agriculture and changes the nature of agrarian discourse. Through a rhetorical analysis of a variety of their materials, I analyze how agrarianism figures in the Greenhorns' recruitment, education, and maintenance. My assessment of these materials reveals that agrarian ideology functions as a central discourse as they recruit people and support a broader movement for sustainable agriculture, educate potential recruits to cultivate an activist agrarian farmer, and maintain the social movement they support by harnessing communication as a resource and stewarding an agrarian rhetorical ecology. Despite drawbacks such as the complexities of relying on an ideology with a brutal history and the difficulty of addressing multiple audiences, the Greenhorns' use of agrarianism demonstrates the utility of the concept in movements that aim to ameliorate environmental degradation. In addition to furthering academic understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of new agrarianism, this dissertation advances understandings of various threads of scholarship in environmental communication and social movement rhetoric.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Food production is a fundamental human activity that is simultaneously material and social. We all benefit from the basic physical processes of farming. Indeed, the material elements of farming, both physical and economic, are important. The labor of farmworkers and the land they use, the tools and machinery, nutrient inputs and food outputs, the globalized food economy are all part of a process by which food from farms reaches and nourishes people's bodies. Farming, however, entails more than the production of food for human consumption. Central to farming is a much deeper history and current reality of social entanglement. Farming is not simply a job or occupation, but a social and political activity that historically has been bound up in US values of self-determination and colonial legacies. Currently, for some, farming is a way of life that entails an almost spiritual commitment to producing food and living in communities that value and share such commitments. What it means to be a farmer has changed significantly over time and more recently has become a location for addressing serious environmental problems facing the planet. Thus, farming is a fraught and complex activity that entails both enduring and novel challenges.

During the past century, material realities for farmers have changed significantly thus changing what it means to be a farmer. The rise of the green revolution heralded the beginning of higher output farming to "feed the world," but these shifts were accompanied by significant changes to the way farmers and farming communities operate. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS), "[i]nnovations in animal and crop genetics, chemicals,

equipment, and farm organization have enabled continuing output growth without adding much to inputs. As a result, even as the amount of land and labor used in farming declined, total farm output nearly tripled between 1948 and 2017."[1] As increasing staple grain yields became a priority, farmers with smaller acreages, fewer animals or those who farmed perishable produce as opposed to commodity crops (i.e., crops/livestock products that can be traded—primarily soy beans and corn in the US[2]) found their way of life harder to maintain.

As farm output increased, the number of farms decreased significantly as farms that remained became more corporate. As data from the USDA makes evident, "after peaking at 6.8 million farms in 1935, the number of U.S. farms fell sharply until leveling off in the early 1970s."[3]Although the number of farms decreased precipitously, the quantity of land being farmed decreased only a small amount resulting in fewer farms with much larger acreage: "on average—about 444 acres in 2017 versus 155 acres in 1935."[4] This development was due to a variety of factors including the above-mentioned changes in farming technology but also because of increased off farm employment

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[1]"Farming and Farm Income," *USDA ERS - Farming and Farm Income* (United States Department of Agriculture, February 5, 2020), accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/farming-and-farm-income/.

[2] "Top U.S. Agricultural Exports in 2017," *Top U.S. Agricultural Exports in 2017* (USDA Foreign Agriculture Service), accessed October 13, 2020, https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/top-us-agricultural-exports-2017.

[3] "Farming and Farm Income," USDA

[4] Ibid.

opportunities driven by urbanization and various US policies which impacted farmers. US agriculture has been plagued by a "boom and bust" cycle for decades, starting with a boom at the beginning of the century leading into increased production during WWI and the subsequent Depression period which saw passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. In essence, this bill raised food prices by paying farmers to produce less in order to drive up demand. However, for a variety of reasons this policy failed to alleviate the pressure on many small farms causing them to continue to shutter while offering larger corporate farms the opportunity to buy them up.[5]

A similar cycle occurred in the 1970's and 80's. Throughout the 1970's global demand for commodity crops increased as the US improved relationships with the Soviet Union and China which were both in need of such agricultural commodities. During this time in the US, high returns on agricultural goods paired with economic policies drove investment and debt in agriculture. This debt became a major problem as Reagan's "supply-side" economic policy and loss of global markets during the escalation of the Cold War caused the agricultural market to plummet.[6] During these boom and bust cycles, large commodity crop producers were able to survive while small and specialty crop production suffered.

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[5] Ann Folino White. *Plowed Under: Food Policy Protests and Performance in New Deal America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015): 8.

[6] Barry J. Barnett. "The U.S. Farm Financial Crisis of the 1980s." *Agricultural History* 74, no. 2 (2000): 367-375.

Currently, the trend of large farms getting bigger and small farms suffering has continued as the collision of social and economic pressures pushes people out of farming. According to the USDA, "[t]en percent (93 million acres) of all land in farms is expected to be transferred during 2015-2019."[7] This shift, either by sale or inheritance, has occurred as financial hardship and social realities change for farmers and farm families. Not only does the cost of farming often outweigh the returns, but many farmers who are ready to retire do not have children who are interested in taking over the farm, resulting in smaller farms being consolidated by large producers. In fact, according to the most recent USDA census of agriculture, "the total number of farms declined between 2012 and 2017, from 2.11 to 2.04 million." The only farms that increased in number were farms making less than $2,500 (from 788,000 to 793,000) and farms making more than $5,000,000 (from 8,000 to 9,000).[8] These smaller farms commonly rely on off farm income: "Slightly more than half of U.S. farms are very small, with annual farm sales under $10,000; the households operating these farms typically rely on off-farm sources for the majority of their household income. In contrast, the typical household operating large-scale farms earned $348,811 in 2018, and most of that came from farming."[9] These

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[7] Daniel Bigelow. Allison Borchers, and Todd Hubbs, *USDA ERS - "U.S. Farmland Ownership, Tenure, and Transfer,*" (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016), iv.

[8] "USDA Census of Agriculture Highlights: Farm Economics Value of Production, Number of Farms, and Income down Slightly," *United States Department of Agriculture* (2019).

[9] "Farming and Farm Income," USDA ERS

statistics suggest that a majority of farmers in the US do not maintain farming as their only pursuit--a stark difference from farmers at the beginning of the previous century.

These consistent changes in economic material conditions for farmers in the US have typically prompted cultural shifts as well as various rhetorical responses from farmers and farmer organizations throughout history and into today. For example, in the late 1890's, as Barry Barnett notes, a populist movement developed as "a reaction against a sustained period of declining [agricultural] prices."[10] Not long after, during the Great Depression farm policies that negatively impacted farmers resulted in backlash.[11] The turmoil did not end there. The 1980's farm crisis during which "the farm sector experienced its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression" also gave rise to much organizing.[12] As public historian Michael Gordon notes:

> Such groups as the National Farmers' Union, Groundswell, Prairiefire Rural Action, the National Farmers Organization, the American Agriculture Movement, the North American Farm Alliance, Rural America, and Save the Family Farm Coalition all speak out for farmers in legislative hearing rooms, in courtrooms, at foreclosure sales, and in political campaigns. While these organizations may differ in emphasis and tactics, all aim at helping today's 'embattled farmer'[13]

Farmers have long organized and fought for their own political, social, and economic wellbeing, but the stakes for their struggles have gone well beyond their own needs. Those stakes might have been cultural and material, extending to the cultural identity of

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[10] Barnet. "The U.S. Farm Financial Crisis of the 1980s,." 378.

[11] Ann Folino White. *Plowed Under: Food Policy Protests and Performance in New Deal America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

[12] Barnett. "The U.S. Farm Financial Crisis of the 1980s," 366.

[13] Michael A Gordon. "Oral Documentation and the Sustainable Agriculture Movement in Wisconsin." *The Public Historian* 11, no. 4 (1989), 83.

rural places and food systems connected to the rest of the world, but now those stakes have shifted again as a looming ecological crisis has put farming front and center in a struggle for common survival. Hence, new questions need to be addressed in understanding how farmers organize to meet this new challenge, especially as the economics of farming become increasingly unstable. This dissertation takes a step in this direction by examining the efforts of the Greenhorns, an organization that devotes its efforts to bridging the praxis, ethics, and rhetoric of environmentally mindful farming in a way that reshapes the character of US agrarianism. In this introduction, I will first provide a brief overview of agrarianism's prior modes and current directions, identify key gaps in the extant literature, and introduce my own research project. My focus is the Greenhorns, a social movement organization led by farmers working to help shape and apply into practice the principles of new sustainable agrarianism.

Perspectives on US Agrarianism

The organizing efforts of farmers and farmer organizations like the Greenhorns could be categorized as belonging to the discourse of US Agrarianism, an ideology stemming from "the idea that agriculture and those whose occupation involves agriculture are especially important and valuable elements of society."[14] Agrarianism amounts to an ideology which might not have originated with farmers themselves but is always centered on them and is often enacted by them. As I will describe in this section,

[14] James A. Montmarquet. *The idea of agrarianism: From hunter-gatherer to agrarian radical in western culture*. University of Idaho Press, (1989): viii.

agrarianism is an evolving discourse that has been taken up by different people at different times but is consistently focused on the production of food and a preference for a particular lifestyle that aims to counter urban capitalist consumption.

Early conceptions of agrarianism in the US were typically interested in the political and economic wellbeing of land owning farmers and began with the Jeffersonian vision of an agrarian society grounded in "an assumption that land ownership for all—for all white men, that is—would ensure the political and economic stability of America."[15] Jefferson's agrarianism has been defined as "agricultural fundamentalism," which Louis Douglas has defined as "an American society based upon a yeoman class of cultivators, numerically superior and politically dominant in a system of democratic decision making."[16] Over time, agrarianism came to be understood less as a socio-political system and more as a particular movement and a site of struggle. To William Bennett Bizzell, it was as "an organized effort on the part of the farm population, or a socially conscious group of farmers, to secure a redistribution of land or the establishment by law of conditions more favorable to the use and occupation of land."[17] It was later defined as "an

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[15] Mark Sturges. "Enclosing the Commons: Thomas Jefferson, Agrarian Independence, and Early American Land Policy, 1774–1789." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 119, no. 1 (2011), 45.

[16] Louis M Douglas. *Agrarianism in American History* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1969), vii

[17] William Bennett Bizzell. *The green rising: an historical survey of agrarianism, with special reference to the organized efforts of the farmers of the United States to improve their economic and social status* (Macmillan Company, 1926), 2.

economic and social system under which the chief method of making a living is that of tilling the soil" and "probably, simply the antithesis of Industrial Capitalism."[18]

As agrarianism shaped to be a counterforce to the pushes and pulls of the industrial revolution, it took on new tasks and targets. Focusing on the development of early 20th century farmer organizing, Jeff Motter has made evident how economic goals and political tools began to be consolidated within the movement. Specifically, he reveals how political organizing driven by an agrarian ideology was predicated on drawing a distinction between the interests of farmers and their communities and those of state.[19] Further illustrating the rhetorical processes by which farmers assumed a collective and distinctive political identity, a recent dissertation by Shannon Stevens demonstrates how the Democratic Farmer Labor party in Minnesota organized in order to "change relationships between the farmer, banker and the state."[20] The rhetorical strategies employed in the political activism by farmers, however, was not the only way agrarianism manifested.

Entwined with these political and rhetorical developments, a mostly southern literary tradition emerged that applied agrarian ideology in support of southern interests. Stephany Houston Grey's work reveals that southern agrarianism was a project of

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[18] Troy Jesse Cauley. *Agrarianism: A program for farmers* (University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 3

[19] Jeff Motter. "Yeoman citizens: the country life association and the reinvention of democratic legitimacy." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 51, no. 1 (2014): 1-16.

[20] Shannon Victoria Stevens. "'Revolution in the countryside': Shifting Financial Paradigms and the Rhetoric of the 'Farm Crisis,' 1925-1933." PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2014, iv

intellectuals who did not themselves farm, but who had an interest in protecting rural agrarian social systems. The southern agrarians, a group of white academic men, "embarked on a systematic philosophical defense of the Old South as a bulwark against industrial mechanization." For Grey, the southern agrarians glorified "the Yeoman South, that great body of free men" who were independent small landholders to solidify a historical spiritual connection to the land.[21] Likewise, Leroy Dorsey argues that Roosevelt's presidential rhetoric redefined the frontier myth in the image of agrarianism to shift away from the idea of an endless frontier, replacing the cowboy hero with a self-sufficient yeoman farmer, whose triumph was "conserving" (most efficiently using) the land.[22] Such discourses signaled a departure from earlier agrarian ideology used by farmers and landowners to their own political, economic, and social ends, and a move toward the development of an agrarian ideology that would address more than just the needs of farmers. In Grey's analysis, "the Southern Agrarian movement foreshadowed the emergence of a new form of agrarianism characterized as a corrective space against the expansion of mass culture and infused its adherents with a militant pastoralism that continues to define its modern manifestations."[23] As Grey hints, agrarianism continues to evolve, conceptually supported by its earlier versions, into modern variations.

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[21] Stephanie Houston Grey. "The gospel of the soil: Southern agrarian resistance and the productive future of food." *Southern Communication Journal* 79, no. 5 (2014), 395

[22] Leroy G Dorsey. "The frontier myth in presidential rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's campaign for conservation." *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 59, no. 1 (1995): 1-19.

[23] Grey. "The Gospel of the Soil," 388

In the second half of the 20th century, agrarianism continued to evolve as popular authors began integrating its tenets with environmental care, highlighting conservation and environmentalism as crucial parts of modern farming. In the writing of authors like Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson, the fate of farmers and rural communities were entwined with the fate of the environment and agricultural land. They helped push agrarianism to include a commitment to the wellbeing of not only the humans in farm communities, but all life involved in the act of producing food. In *The Unsettling of America*, Berry insisted that the increase in farm production was a development "not motivated by agricultural aims or disciplines, but by the ambitions of merchants, industrialists, bureaucrats, and academic careerists"[24] Here he affirmed the political and economic ideals already present in agrarianism: the notion that outside forces of capitalism push farm communities to develop in a way that is not in the interest of farmers, and he added that "we should not be surprised to find that its effects on both the farmland and the farm people has been ruinous."[25] Throughout his book, Berry expanded on the connection between degradation of the farming economy and community and the farm land. Contemporaries of Berry like Wes Jackson added to this body of thought, shifting the purview of the agrarian ideology to include protection of the land and environment as a central value.[26]

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[24] Wendell Berry, *Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (Berkley, CA: Counterpoint, 2015): 37

[25] Ibid.

[26] Wes Jackson, *New Roots for Agriculture* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1980).

As agrarianism has continued to reorganize around these new environmental concerns, it has evolved into what many are calling "new agrarianism." New agrarianism developed out of the philosophical history of agrarianism with adjustments by authors like Berry and Jackson into a framework that prioritizes a mutually beneficial, healthy relationship between people and the environment they rely on. This positions agrarianism as an ideology that emphasizes the collective good of all people and the planet (not just farmers and people who live in rural areas) via environmentally conscious food production. New agrarianism deemphasizes land ownership and specific economic relations like those between farmers and banks but still relies on the engrained ideals of anti-capitalism and the value and importance of farming for human communities. In this way, it departs further from the discourses captured by Jackson and Berry. While it is primarily concerned with the interactions of farmers, their immediate communities, and the land they own, new agrarianism involves people in all parts of the food system and recognizes the connection between land and complex environmental forces.

Capturing the character and significance of the discursive transformation of agrarianism is still an open scholarly project that this dissertation aims to join. Just as agrarianism took on various forms at the beginning of the last century, the new agrarianism of the 21st century is also an umbrella term that captures various expressions that share common roots and commitments. Eric Freyfogle captures this new iteration of agrarianism by explaining that:

> Agrarianism, broadly conceived, reaches beyond food production and rural living to include a wide constellation of ideas, loyalties, sentiments, and hopes. It is a temperament and a moral orientation as well as a suite of economic practices, all arising out of the insistent truth that people everywhere are part of the land

> community, just as dependent as other life on the land's fertility and just as shaped by its mysteries and possibilities.[27]

This assessment of agrarianism demonstrates a departure from the central idea of what could be described as the "old" agrarianism which emphasized farmers and rural people as a distinct social group that needed protection from urban power and capitalist development. The discursive shift from the "old" to the "new" agrarianism also constitutes a move from a commitment to a distinct social role and economic position, to an ideology that anyone, regardless of occupation or location, can take up. Arguably, this development is quite significant because it turns agrarianism into an inclusive discourse that works on both sides of the supply and demand chain. Sustainability is no longer a mandate reserved only for those who farm the land. It can also extend to the consumers of farm products who now also get to play a role and hold some responsibility for orienting their practices toward promoting certain environmentally sustainable visions of farming. Consumer trends such as the "local food" and the "slow food" movements could be seen as evidence of this greater inclusivity.

Despite such significant changes in the premises of agrarianism, the essential belief that the ideology requires a necessary rejection of capitalist consumer culture remains. It is not necessarily the case that all consumer culture becomes the object of scorn. There are certain nuances to the critique–be it of the mass produced global or of specific kinds of consumerism–but they lead to generalizable dispositional claim regardless. For example, Norman Wirzba suggests that "[a]grarianism is the compelling

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[27] Eric T. Freyfogle, ed. *The new agrarianism: land, culture, and the community of life*. Island Press, 2001: 1

alternative to the modern industrial/technological/economic paradigm. It is […] a deliberate and intentional way of living and thinking that takes seriously the failures and successes of the past as they have been realized in our engagement with the earth and with each other." He further suggests that,

> Authentic agrarianism, which should not be confused with farming per se (since the severe economic pressure and the dash for quick profits have often led farmers to compromise agrarian ideals), represents the sustained attempt to live faithfully and responsibly in a world of limits and possibilities.[28]

Similarly, the guiding definition for a book series titled *Agrarianism in a Culture of the Land: A Series in the New Agrarianism* argues that "[a]grarianism is a comprehensive worldview that appreciates the intimate and practical connections that exists between humans and the earth. It stands as our most promising alternative to the unsustainable and destructive ways of current global, industrial, and consumer culture."[29] Thus, the term "new" agrarianism marks as much a shift as a continuation of key ideas, which necessitates a fine-grained analysis of this dynamic discourse.

Rhetorical scholars in particular can help identify the communicative elements of "old" agrarianism that have become part of the distinctly forward looking environmental ethic demanded by the "new" agrarian ideology. The phenomenon of old traditions

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[28] Norman Wirzba, ed. *The essential agrarian reader: The future of culture, community, and the land.* University Press of Kentucky, 2003: 4.

[29] "The University Press of Kentucky." The University Press of Kentucky - About the Book. Accessed May 09, 2018. https://www.kentuckypress.com/live/series_detail.php?seriesID=CULL

becoming part of new ideas is best captured by Robert Cox who suggest in "Argument and Usable Tradition" that

> the redress of economic and class inequities, or amelioration of the environment for example, may require practices that rely upon new ethics or warrants. Yet, such warrants- if they are to gain a public hearing- cannot be totally invented; they must be grounded in cultural traditions that, in turn, underlie existing practices[30]

Cox calls these existing warrants usable traditions. In this case, some older understandings of agrarianism have become the usable tradition of new agrarianism. Specifically, the long-held beliefs about the value of economically independent and self-sufficient farming and the old political practices of agrarianism serve as grounds for the new ethic of care for environment, making it useful for envisioning a better future. Put simply, understanding new agrarianism as an ideology which takes up some elements of old agrarianism and incorporates them into a new environmental ethic can help us make sense of some of the disparate ways agrarianism has been understood in communication studies. Highlighting the particular points of continuation and contrast and understanding their significance becomes the gist of the project that this dissertation aims to join in.

For the most part, rhetorical scholars have focused their attention on the ideational qualities of agrarianism, particularly its reliance on mythic narratives that now provide the grounds for the new agrarian environmental ethic. Jeff Motter and Ross Singer define agrarianism as "a normative philosophical tradition, set of practices, and malleable mythic frame that functions in a society re-created in an anti-agrarian image of

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[30] Cox, J. Robert. "Argument and usable traditions." *Argumentation Across the Disciplinary Lines* (2011): 93

(sub)urbanization and corporatization."[31] And Grey explains that the writings of southern agrarians "form a tapestry that Burke would have identified as a mythic rhetoric of purification and return—a dynamic chain of discursive enactments designed to transcend perverse futures for a lost, spiritual origin."[32] Methodologically relying on frame analysis, Singer offers a definition of US agrarianism as "a philosophical tradition and malleable discursive frame adopting, defending, revising, and reproducing mythic assumptions about the morality of farming" that "has long served as a flexible interpretive frame of rhetorical identification for movements across the political spectrum."[33] In their recently released book *Rooted Resistance: Agrarian Myth in Modern America*, Singer, Grey, and Motter define agrarianism as "a malleable formation of ideas regarding the citizen-farmer's exceptional virtue and agriculture's vital role in the nation's democratic prosperity."[34] Thus, much of the extant literature on agrarianism in rhetorical studies has focused on its ideational qualities—its mythologies, philosophical tenets and rhetorical frames, with relatively less attention to the lived, material communicative praxis of agrarianism.

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[31] Jeff Motter, and Ross Singer. "Review essay: Cultivating a rhetoric of agrarianism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 4 (2012): 440.

[32] Grey "The Gospel" 392

[33] Ross Singer. "Visualizing agrarian myth and place-based resistance in South Central Los Angeles." *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2011): 345.

[34] Ross Singer, Stephanie Houston Grey, and Jeff Motter. *Rooted Resistance: Agrarian Myth in Modern America*. University of Arkansas Press, 2020, 17

Granted, the new agrarianism certainly offers a continuation of older tropes and commitments, but its emergent orientation to the exigencies of environmental sustainability also generates new challenges for the way its ethical commitments can be put into practice. Such challenges necessarily entail rhetorical work to the extent that they call for continuous interplay between the material and the spiritual/symbolic, in a Burkean sense.[35] The goals of new agrarianism also put communication front and center as they expand its organizational scope beyond the farmers' own social networks. In this sense, new agrarianism can and should be examined as a communication phenomenon, but we should do so in ways that are more attentive to the ideology's pragmatic, lived, and organizational dimensions. Hence, in the next section I lay out a rationale for my dissertation project.

Project Description and Justification

Much of the extant research on agrarianism prioritizes questions about its ideological underpinnings. For example, in their book about agrarian myth, Singer, Grey and Motter focus much of their attention on how agrarianism works among broader US discourses. As such, existing work in the field does not fully account for the experiences of the farmers engaged in agrarian thinking or their political activism and the research is, with a few exceptions, mostly focused on agrarianism as a self-standing discourse that is somehow removed from the material experiences and practices of farming. Put simply,

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[35] Kenneth Burke, "What are the Signs of What?" A Theory of 'Entitlement," *Anthropological Linguistics* 4, no. 6 (1962): 1-23.

studies of how farmers inhabit and enact the tenets of agrarianism are lacking. Yet, it is precisely in these experiences that agrarian ideals have the capacity to be realized. Hence, my aim is to better understand the communicative strategies and experiences of farmers who intentionally orient themselves to the tenets of agrarianism and who try to bring others into its fold. In other words, I am interested in the ways in which farmers today partake in the ideological formation that is agrarianism, how they live it, experience it, make it meaningful for themselves and for others, shape it, and move it forward.

Such research is both timely and necessary in the contemporary context. Recalling the statistics discussed in the beginning, the current state of agriculture in the US is deeply at odds with the ethical and material commitments of new agrarianism. Modern agribusiness is fundamentally incompatible with this vision because its focus is typically profit above all else, while new agrarianism is concerned with the wellbeing of humans and our land community. If new agrarianism is truly "our most promising alternative" to the systems that support unsustainable farming, then it is crucial to understand if, and in what ways, it is being applied to fixing the problems laid out so clearly by the likes of Berry, Jackson, Freryfogle and the many other thinkers who have identified the dire situation in which we find ourselves. This work requires studying how farmers today integrate these ideas into their work as farmers, thinkers and activists and how their work informs the development of new agrarianism as a philosophy, ethic, and way of life.

The value of re-centering farmers in such investigation, however, goes beyond gaining an understanding of the ideological contours of new agrarianism and farmers' relationship to it. A cognate area of study in environmental communication is emerging

which seeks to understand the communicative and rhetorical elements of food systems and the environment. Communication scholarship about agrarianism can catch up to new agrarian thinking by integrating food systems research in response to this emerging topic. In a recent review article in *Environmental Communication*, Constance Gordon and Kathleen Hunt show that communication scholars have started "treating food as an important ecological concern" and urge us to take up food systems research as an important element of environmental communication.[36] They define a food system as "the nexus of practices from seed to fork, including but not limited to, food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal, and the host of human and non-human relations that constitute these processes."[37] They go on to lay out an agenda for studying food systems in environmental communication and suggest that food system reform, food justice, and food sovereignty should be a priority in food system research in environmental communication.[38] Through these three pillars, they encourage

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[36] While research in these areas is present in a variety of multi/interdisciplinary sources that consider food like the journals *Gastronomica*, *Food and foodways* and, *Food Culture & Society*, among others, Gordon and Hunt correctly point out that there is an important place for food studies within communication and rhetoric as a discipline, especially insofar as food and food systems relate to environmental communication

[37] Constance Gordon, and Kathleen Hunt. "Reform, justice, and sovereignty: A food systems agenda for environmental communication." *Environmental Communication* 13, no. 1 (2019): 10.

[38] There are a few examples of scholarship that begins to do this work, notably including: Schell, Eileen. "The Racialized Rhetorics of Food Politics: Black Farmers, the Case of Shirley Sherrod, and Struggle for Land Equity and Access." *Poroi: Journal of the Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2015): 1-22. Which considers food justice and the connection between race and agricultural policy and Spoel, Philippa, and Colleen Derkatch. "Resilience and self-reliance in Canadian food charter discourse." *Poroi* 15, no. 1 (2020): 8. Which deals with the connection between a food charter and the food system

consideration of the food system as a whole. This approach is especially important for making sense of contemporary agrarianism because many farmers are not just interested in only one part of the food system; they also care about how they fit into a larger whole.

It is worth emphasizing that this call from Gordon and Hunt to study food systems is not a result of communication scholars neglecting food research altogether. Rather, it acknowledges that much of the critical communication research in food systems has focused on the consumptive end of the food system rather than the productive end and calls for the whole system to be considered instead. In addition to a variety of articles, many of which focus on food related social movements,[39] a few notable collections dealing with food rhetoric have been published in the past decade. *Food, Feminisms, Rhetorics,* responds to a call for "more critical attention to cooking culture in general" through studies that apply feminist rhetorical theory.[40] The collection is explicitly focused on the preparation and consumption of food rather than its production. Similarly, *The Rhetoric of Food: Discourse, Materiality, and Power*, which aims to present "diverse essays that take various rhetorical approaches to analyzing *The Rhetoric of Food"* and its intersections with discourse and materiality offer only a few explorations of the

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[39] A few examples of such research include: Dubisar, Abby M. "Toward a Feminist Food Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review* 37, no. 1 (2018): 118-130; Garner, Benjamin. "Conflicting messages: The visual rhetoric of slow food." *Communication Today* 6, no. 2 (2015): 112-119; Prody, Jessica M. "A call for polycultural arguments: critiquing the monoculture rhetoric of the local food movement." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 50, no. 2 (2013): 104-119.

[40] Kristin K. Winet, Abby L. Wilkerson, Winona Landis, Alexis M. Baker, Arlene Voski Avakian, Carrie Helms Tippen, Erin Branch et al. *Food, Feminisms, Rhetorics* (SIU Press, 2017) :3

production of food among many chapters about food consumption, marketing and legislating.[41] Although both of these collections include some essays about food production and food purchasing, as a whole they focus on the rhetorical dimensions of food consumption and preparation or critiques of problems related to food. This work is an important step towards understanding food systems as Gordon and Hunt call for but considering primarily where food ends up (or doesn't end up) does not adequately examine the rhetorical dimensions of food systems.

All parts of the food system--how food is produced, how it travels and the ways in which people and nonhumans within this system interact--are rhetorical to some degree. My dissertation project, therefore, intervenes by centering farmer dialogue and meaning making as a point of interaction between social and material forces. I am specifically interested in how one farmer-run organization, the Greenhorns, advocate for sustainable agriculture and to what extent they embrace new agrarianism as a form of active and connected living. Specifically, I investigated the following broad research questions:

1. What are the rhetorical dimensions of sustainable agrarianism as figured and enacted by the Greenhorns, a social movement organization composed of farmers and committed to the tenets of new agrarianism?
2. And, how is sustainable agriculture made sustainable through the discourses and organizing of the Greenhorns?

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[41] Joshua Frye and Michael Bruner, eds. *The rhetoric of food: Discourse, materiality, and power*. Routledge, (2012): 2 Emphasis in original

To pursue these questions, I examined the Greenhorns, an organization formed by and working for young farmers across the United States. A small organization, headquartered in a small coastal Maine town with only eleven people listed as part of their team[42] The Greenhorns none the less have a wide reach. Having been characterized as leaders of "the new farmer movement,"[43] the Greenhorns describe themselves as

> a non-traditional grassroots non-profit organization made up of young farmers and a diversity of collaborators. Our mission is to recruit, promote and support the new generation of young farmers. We do this by producing avant-garde programming, video, audio, web content, publications, events, and art projects that increase the odds for success and enhance the profile and social lives of America's young farmers.[44]

The Greenhorns focus on sustainable agriculture, livelihoods, communities, land, and futures. They work to make farming accessible to young and beginning farmers by producing a wide array of media sources including a documentary, podcast, numerous blogs, and a web series. They also publish a biennial anthology *The New Farmer's Almanac* in which they compile, edit, and publish a large collection of work around farming: narratives from farmers, astrological information, art, poetry, blueprints and essays. In the tradition of the old farmer's almanac, this collection is designed to share information with farmers and make predictions for the future for a new generation of farmers. Notably, agrarianism is explicitly embedded in this publication; the Greenhorns point out on their website that the *New Farmer's Almanac* "is a window into the

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[42] "Our Team". Accessed September 19, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about/our-team/

[43] Paula Manalo, Severine von Tscharner Fleming, and Zoe Ida Bradbury (eds.), *Greenhorns: 50 Dispatches from the New Farmers Movement* (Storey Publishing: 2012).

[44] "Home.". Accessed October 1, 2020. https://Greenhorns.org/.

undercurrents of agrarian thinking"[45] making this organization particularly useful as a site from which to pursue my research questions. In addition to their media production, the Greenhorns host workshops and seminars at their headquarters and partner with a number of other organizations working to make agrarian life in a sustainable world possible creating a broad distributed network of members and interlocuters. Many of these materials serve as the archive for this dissertation.

I analyzed the Greenhorns' activities and textual materials through a social movement lens situating the Greenhorns as a social movement organization (SMO). Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash define social movements as "a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures."[46] They explain that social movement organizations (SMOs) are a manifestation of the movements they are associated with and create their goals around these social movement purposes. SMOs aim to change "society and its members" and this change is driven by purpose and values as opposed to financial gain. The Greenhorns are a social movement organization which developed out of the sustainable agriculture movement. Their stated values include a fundamental belief that "reform of agricultural practices is critical for human survival on earth" with the goal to "promote, recruit, and support them [new farmers] into the culture of our movement and into the work on the land."[47] Studying the Greenhorns as an SMO allows me to answer my research questions

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[45] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed October 1, 2020. https://Greenhorns.org/about.

[46] Mayer N Zald, and Roberta Ash. "Social movement organizations: Growth, decay and change." *Social forces* 44, no. 3 (1966), 329.

[47] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed October 1, 2020.

by centering how their rhetoric aligns their values to their goals and activities to promote more sustainable food systems.

Much of the research focused on SMOs comes from fields in sociology that study organizations as human structures which mobilize resources and relate to larger networks within social movements. My goal is to use these concepts to study not the organization in and of itself, but the discourses produced by the organization because I am primarily interested in the way new farmers and their allies form the communicative networks necessary to produce and maintain agricultural practices that are sustainable both in ecological and in social terms. In his assessment of discourse in environmental SMOs, Robert Brulle argues that "changes in social structures are brought about through a redefinition of what constitutes the common sense embodied in the everyday practices of society."[48] Hence I seek to understand how such changes in common sense develop rhetorically: how do the Greenhorns do the work of redefining ideas and practices to support the version of sustainable agriculture they seek?

Scholars of organization rhetoric and communication have long acknowledged that "identification is a fundamental, perhaps *the* fundamental challenge of human association and organization."[49] Following this perspective, this dissertation is essentially

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[48] Robert J. Brulle. "Environmental discourse and social movement organizations: A historical and rhetorical perspective on the development of US environmental organizations." *Sociological Inquiry* 66, no. 1 (1996), 61

[49] Robert L. Heath, George Cheney, and Oyvind Ihlen, "Identification: Connection and Division in Organizational Rhetoric and Communication," in Oyvind Ihlen and Robert L. Heath (eds.), *The Handbook of Organizational Rhetoric and Communication* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 113.

an ethos and identification study: it explores new farmers' rhetorical processes of self-making, it traces the textual means of their world-making, and it seeks to understand how and if such communicative processes of connectivity can amount to a kind of material rhetoric that can produce sustainable food systems. Among these various lines of inquiry one theme reappears throughout: attention to the historicity of agrarianism, how it is taken up as a useable tradition and how it informs modern "new" agrarian movement making.

In each chapter of this dissertation, I explore the historicity of agrarian thought in relationship to the ways that it appears in social movement organizing. In his guide to SMO research Lofland lays out a number of common questions about SMOs. A few of these also help guide my assessment of the Greenhorns' rhetoric: What are the SMO's beliefs? Why do people join SMOs? And what are SMO strategies?[50] Adding a rhetorical lens to these questions, I investigate what the Greenhorns believe about themselves and the world, how they encourage others to share those beliefs and by what means they work to achieve their goals. Taking the Greenhorns as a gateway into the life-world and sustainability-oriented practices of new agrarianism, in the following chapters I first explore how new farmers are recruited into the movement (chapter 1), how they become equipped with the necessary tools, skills, knowledge, dispositions, and connections to *be* sustainable farmers (chapter 2), and how the movement maintains its membership and momentum so that new agrarianism grows sustainably (chapter 3). I conclude by

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[50] John Loflad. *Social movement organizations: Guide to research on insurgent realities*. Transaction Publishers, 1996.

reflecting on what was learned about the limits and possibilities of new agrarianism through the case study of the Greenhorns' efforts to enact sustainable change in agricultural practices. Exploring these themes requires a wide variety of theoretical approaches and results in findings not easily summarized here. Thus, I have included a table laying out what you can expect to find in each chapter.

Chapter	**Research questions**	**Theoretical Perspectives**	**Findings**
Chapter 2	-How does this organization recruit people to join in its cause? -What central values and goals of agrarianism drive the Greenhorns' Recruitment?	-Social Movement Organization Theory -Functions of Social movement rhetoric -Useable traditions -Identification	-The Greenhorns new agrarian ideology offers significant capacity for building identification - The complex violent history of US agrarianism makes it a risky history to rely on - the wide audience of new agrarianism makes appealing to all the relevant movement actors difficult
Chapter 3	- How do the Greenhorns (re)produce the knowledge and skills that are necessary to put their vision into practice.	-Social movement learning -Useable Tradition -Constitutive rhetoric -Environmental material rhetoric	- By including practical skills, guiding the development of an agrarian worldview and encouraging a particular praxis, the Greenhorns create the conditions to cultivate a particular way of engaging.

			- The division between old and new social movements is indeed not as clean cut as some scholars make it out to be.
Chapter 4	-How do the Greenhorns make their organization and the movement for sustainable agriculture sustainable?	-Resource mobilization theory -Social movement networks -Rhetorical ecology/affect	- Their most important resource is communication which, combined with other resources, helps to establish and maintain a rhetorical ecology. -When successful, this ecology provides the Greenhorns with a flexible structure where agrarianism operates through affective engagement with the organization and the movement.

Chapter Two: Recruitment in Rhetorical Functions of a Social Movement

No movement could be sustainable without regularly bringing in new members. Hence this chapter focuses on the rhetorical dimensions of the Greenhorns' recruitment strategies while also maintaining a broader interest in the way agrarianism itself ensures its renewal. With the Greenhorns at the center of this investigation, I pursue the following questions: How does this organization recruit people to join in its cause? What central values and goals of agrarianism drive the Greenhorns' Recruitment? Likewise, what choices do they make that might limit their reach? Using rhetorical analysis and SMO theory, I investigate how the Greenhorns enter and shape the discourse of agrarianism in their efforts to build a sustainable agricultural movement. In particular, I am interested in how they integrate agrarianism and its ideals into their recruitment through their media including their almanacs which they call "a window into the undercurrents of agrarian thinking"[51] and "a place to practice our rhetoric, our research practice, our personal and collective oratory."[52]

Based on my analysis of their recruitment materials, I argue that agrarian ideology is a foundational element of the Greenhorns' recruitment and environmental communication but that the racist and violent past of US colonialism inherent in the history of US agrarianism and its broad scope of potential audience complicates their messages. The foundational tenets of agrarianism fuel the Greenhorns' effort to articulate

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[51] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed October 1, 2020. https://greenhorns.org/about.

[52] Fleming, Severine V.T. "Introduction" *The New Farmer's Almanac 2017: Commons*. Edited by Nina Pick. Vol. 3. (The Greenhorns 2017). 17

farming as a calling that values commitments to community and the environment. However, such legacy values also entail troubled histories and connections which have prompted the Greenhorns to be selective, strategic, and innovative in the way they partake in agrarian discourse. To highlight the ways in which the Greenhorns bring agrarianism into a new form through their recruitment efforts, in what follows, I first sketch the history of rhetorical efforts to recruit and maintain farmers in the US. I then analyze how that discourse has been picked up, re-shaped and deployed in various functions of social movement rhetoric as part of the Greenhorns effort to build a sustainable social movement organization.

History of Agrarian Organizing and Recruitment

In its Jeffersonian form, early agrarianism served as a major intellectual and rhetorical framework for the recruitment of farmers and settlers to the frontier and it was integral to the US ideology of "manifest destiny." Agrarianism helped make stealing land and converting wilderness into agricultural production a central virtue of the US American settler colonialism. According to Andrew Hollowchack:

> Agrarianism for Jefferson, in keeping with the progressivism of the Enlightenment, was a melioristic ideal. It preached the self-sufficiency and autonomy of an agrarian lifestyle, while it advocated science and technology sufficient to make that lifestyle efficient enough both for domestic leisure and for some measure of local political participation—each an essential component of his republicanism."[53]

[53] Andrew M. Holowchak. "Jefferson's moral agrarianism: poetic fiction or normative vision?" *Agriculture and Human Values* 28 (2011): 504

To Jefferson, agrarianism was necessary to create the America he envisioned. However, implicit in this understanding of Jefferson's agrarianism was the brutal policy of assimilation and removal of indigenous people from their traditional lands. This was a policy which accelerated during his presidency and was followed up during subsequent presidencies with atrocities like the Indian Removal Act which led to the displacement and genocide of native people.[54]

The Jeffersonian version of agrarian ideology and its related policies supported a constant westward expansion which was carried out by white yeoman farmers and entailed the need to recruit such farmers to the frontier. According to US census data, the US population was growing quickly during the westward expansion of the 1800s with growth rates between 32% and 36% every ten years between 1800 and 1850.[55] Following the policies of Native American removal and genocide in the first half of the 19th century, this growing replacement population was encouraged to settle newly stolen lands via policies like the Homestead acts. Initially, public land under the Land Ordinance of 1785 was split up and sold at relatively high prices and in very large acreages, typically 640 acres per farmer. However, this practice became politically unpopular in part because of agrarian ideals that held that small landholders were ideal for American democracy. As the need to raise revenue for the federal government decreased, prioritizing these ideals became more economically and politically possible leading to the passage of the

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[54]Wallace, Anthony FC. *Jefferson and the Indians: The tragic fate of the first Americans*. Harvard University Press, 2009. 17

[55] History Staff. "Fast Facts - History" *U.S. Census Bureau*. Accessed December 17, 2020.https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/.

Homestead Act in 1862, which provided settlers with the necessary capital to build farms, granted 160 acres to any applicant with the only stipulation that they were US citizens or intended to become one and had never fought against the US. After five years of residence and production on granted land, homesteaders could apply for permanent ownership of the land. This act continued with some amendments over time until President Franklin Roosevelt effectively ended the program via executive orders in 1934 and 1935 when the only unclaimed remaining land was not suitable for farming or ranching.[56]

Ultimately, "over the 76-year period in consideration, 3 million people applied for homesteads, and almost 1.5 million households were given title to nearly 246 million acres of land [...] a total acreage close to the land area of Texas and California combined."[57] The recipients of this land were primarily white Americans and European immigrants. Indigenous people were not allowed US citizenship until 1924, barring them from taking back their land via these policies. Also, although freed Black Americans after the Civil War were included in the Act and explicitly encouraged to apply for land in the more specific southern Homestead Act of 1866, "features of the legislation worked against its use as a tool to empower blacks in their quest for land."[58] However, the bill

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[56] Trina Shanks RW. "The Homestead Act: A major asset-building policy in American history." *Inclusion in the American dream: Assets, poverty, and public policy* (2005): 21-25

[57] Ibid. 26

[58] Melvin, Oliver and Thomas Shapiro. *Black wealth/white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality*. Routledge, 2013.14

"did provide part of the basis for the fact that by 1900 one quarter of southern black farmers owned their own farms."[59] In the great plains region, where much of the granted land was located, only "approximately 3,500 black claimants succeeded in obtaining their patents (titles) from the General Land Office, granting them ownership of approximately 650,000 acres of prairie land," according to research funded by the National Parks Service conducted at the University of Nebraska.[60]

At the same time that the US government was building its agrarian vision for the nation, groups of farmers in what might be considered early farmer social movements were organizing to help each other in the wake of land access granted by the federal government. One such movement was the early Grange movement of the mid to late 1800s. As troops returned home and demand for agricultural products changed in the aftermath of the Civil War, small scale farmers struggled and "[a]lthough the Homestead Act of 1862 had opened up cheap land to aspiring farmers, improved capital-intensive farm technology made it difficult for small farmers to achieve economic success."[61] The end of the century ushered in growing economic disparity and "as farmers suffered, they

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[59] Ibid. 15

[60]U.S. Department of the Interior. "African American Homesteaders in the Great Plains" U.S. National Park Service. Accessed February 8, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/articles/african-american-homesteaders-in-the-great-plains.htm.

[61] Bourne, Jenny. *In essentials, unity: an economic history of the Grange movement.* Ohio University Press, 2017. 6

observed others amassing enormous amounts of wealth."[62] This rising discontent resulted in farmers organizing to support each other and their economic interests.

Such farmer organizing resulted in a shift in the way agrarianism was understood. These movements built upon the philosophical viewpoint of Jefferson, especially his idea about the ideal citizenry of a republic, to create an active "organized effort on the part of the farm population, or a socially conscious group of farmers, to secure a redistribution of land or the establishment by law of conditions more favorable to the use and occupation of land."[63] The Grange movement was at the forefront of such efforts. This organization was started by Oliver Kelly, a Boston native who tried and failed at farming in northern Minnesota and later moved to Washington where he and other interested parties organized the Grange movement, officially electing the first officers in 1867. Kelly was also a member of the Masonic Order and borrowed their structure for the Grange in which subordinate chapters organized at the community level, connected to the state level, and ultimately to the National Grange. This connection also helped with initial recruiting, as Kelly was able to gain access to otherwise disinterested or actively hostile potential members who accepted him as a masonic brother.[64]

As Kelly and his associates began recruiting, they struggled initially until enlisting paid recruiters to "obtain an introduction to a leading farmer, win over the

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[62] Ibid. 7

[63] Bizzell, "*The green rising,"* 2.

[64] Bourne, *In essentials, unity,* 14-15.

farmer by stressing the practical benefits of the Grange, and enlist the farmer's help in signing up his neighbors."[65] In addition to practical recruitment tactics like relying on paid recruiters and leveraging community networks, the Grange also relied on a carefully designed ideology that made the organization palatable to as many people as possible while supporting the needs of farmers. First, they were decidedly conservative and nonpartisan. Early recruiters touted that the organization refused to "ally itself with the knights of labor," one of the most progressive organizations of the labor movement at the time. Likewise, members were "encouraged as American citizens to 'take a proper interest' in the nation's politics [...] but were never to engage in partisan activity." Additionally, although most members were "middle-of-the-road protestants," the organization was explicit that it had no religious affiliation and that the only requirement for entry was that candidates were farmers.[66]

Despite this mild political position, the Grange worked collectively towards a mission that directly impacted the lives of their members. In their declaration of purpose, they stated: "We propose meeting together, talking together, working together, buying together, selling together and in general acting together for our mutual protection and advancement."[67] Their work centered on creating a community of small farmers who supported each other and pushed for economic policies that benefited small farmers and prevented outside forces from taking advantage of them. In addition to these practical

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[65] Ibid. 10.

[66] Ibid. 19.

[67] Ibid. 1.

goals, “development of high moral standards and a devotion to continuing education (particularly agricultural education)” were intrinsic to the organization and how they encouraged others to join.[68] Not only was this organization useful for clarifying and pushing policies that farmers needed, it also provided educational and social opportunities to farmers in rural parts of the country. By 1875, the Grange membership totaled 858,050 with nearly half of all members residing in the Midwest.[69]

Although it was more populist in nature as it was overtly concerned with the political and social well being of farmers, this version of agrarianism was not immune to the racism and colonial mindset it inherited. Most of the membership of the Grange was white male protestant farmers although it was possible for others to join. Notably, the organization intentionally included women, with some attaining leadership roles. However, they were not strictly equal in the organization and had different levels of membership available to them.[70] The relative progressivism of encouraging white women to join was not matched by encouraging Black or other non-White people. Although Black people were not technically barred from joining, as Saloutos acknowledges, “this was nothing more than a convenient device to permit southerners to exclude Negroes [sic] from the locals and still enable the national organization to boast hypocritically that it did not exclude anyone on racial grounds.”[71] Ultimately, this farmer organization

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[68] Ibid. 19.

[69] Ibid. 12.

[70] Ibid. 12-14.

[71] Theodore Saloutos. "The Grange in the South, 1870-1877." *The Journal of Southern History* 19, no. 4 (1953): 477.

mirrored the trends in land acquisition spurred by Jeffersonian visions of an agrarian populace and indigenous genocide. Just like men and women could apply for land under the Homestead Act, both men and women were part of the organizing efforts of this organization which arose to support small landholding farmers and, although technically available to free Black Americans, the reality of their inclusion was bleak.

Despite being excluded from primarily White farmer organizing, Black agrarianism developed at this time too and it has been part of the African American farmer experience ever since. According to Kimberly Smith, "[d]rawing on and responding to the dominant ideology of democratic agrarianism, nineteenth-century black writers developed an agrarian critique of slavery and racial oppression."[72] Assessing the history of pastoral agrarian thought in Black power movements, Russel Rickford has also made evident the degree to which "pastoralism came to rival urbanism as the critical terrain of pan-African nationalist imagination during the early to mid-1970s […] illuminating the full scope of the period's revolutionary aspirations and emphasizing the role of counter symbols—including the ideal of an autonomous land base—in black political culture."[73] Furthermore, based on interviews with contemporary black southern farmers, King Quisumbing et.al. contend that Black agrarianism should not be relegated

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[72]Kimberly Smith. "Black agrarianism and the foundations of black environmental thought." *Environmental ethics* 26, no. 3 (2004): 267.

[73] Rickford, Russell. ""We can't grow food on all this concrete": The land question, agrarianism, and Black nationalist thought in the late 1960s and 1970s." *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 4 (2017): 958.

to history. Rather, they argue that "concrete, material autonomy in the face of a history of oppression and structural discrimination (rather than the abstract independence of white agrarianism) is at the center of the Black agrarian vision."[74] Thus, agrarianism became a useful concept for Black farmer organizers as they tried to build organizations rooted in their own needs and experiences that were left out of White lead farmer organizations.

Of course, farmer organizing on behalf of mostly White communities also continued throughout the subsequent century on this trajectory, solidifying farmer organizing as an integral part of agrarianism. In the late 1890's, as Barnett explains, a populist movement developed as "a reaction against a sustained period of declining [agricultural] prices."[75] Not long after, during the Great Depression farm policies that negatively impacted farmers resulted in backlash.[76] The 1980's farm crisis during which "the farm sector experienced its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression " also gave rise to much organizing.[77] As Michael Gordon notes:

> Such groups as the National Farmers' Union, Groundswell, Prairiefire Rural Action, the National Farmers Organization, the American Agriculture Movement, the North American Farm Alliance, Rural America, and Save the Family Farm Coalition all speak out for farmers in legislative hearing rooms, in courtrooms, at foreclosure sales, and in political campaigns. While these organizations may differ in emphasis and tactics, all aim at helping today's 'embattled farmer.'[78]

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[74] King Quisumbing, Katrina, Spencer D. Wood, Jess Gilbert, and Marilyn Sinkewicz. "Black agrarianism: The significance of African American landownership in the rural South." *Rural Sociology* 83, no. 3 (2018): 696.

[75] Barnett, "The U.S. Farm Financial Crisis of the 1980s." 378.

[76] White, "*Plowed Under,"* 8.

[77] Barnett, "The U.S. Farm Financial Crisis" 366

[78]Gordon, "Oral Documentation and the Sustainable Agriculture Movement. "83.

Farmers have long organized around agrarian ideals to support their own political, social, and economic well being and to protect the cultural identity of rural places.

Historically, agrarian recruitment efforts relied on emphasizing the collective power to address these personal, political and cultural needs by encouraging farmers to identify with the agrarian social movement and its organizations. For much of history, this resulted in alienating Black and Indigenous people, who had been systematically barred from owning land, while prioritizing the needs of White farmers whose ownership of land was an essential aspect of agrarianism. Times, however, have changed, the character of agrarianism has shifted, and the exigencies to which agrarianism responds have evolved. While still dealing with the economic and social well being of farmers, new agrarianism has incorporated looming environmental disaster as an important aspect of the discourse. In the remainder of the chapter, I will assess where recruitment fits in the functions of social movement rhetoric, how the Greenhorns as a new agrarian movement organization recruit members and farmers by encouraging identification around both old and new agrarian issues, and what challenges of recruitment arise from their rhetorical choices.

Rhetorical Functions and Strategies of SMO Recruitment

In examining the Greenhorns' recruitment efforts, I want to start with the premise that they can be treated as a social movement organization (SMO). From there, I seek to clarify the connection between their recruitment strategies as a particular SMO and the growth of the overall movement discourse of new agrarianism that they are a part of. Zald

and Ash, whose work focuses on the role of SMOs, define social movements as "a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures."[79] They explain that social movement organizations (SMOs) are a manifestation of the movements they are associated with and create their goals around these social movement purposes. Zald and Ash also contend that SMOs aim to change "society and its members" and this change is driven by purpose and values as opposed to financial gain.[80] From there it is possible to deduce that for new members to join and remain part of a movement, some meaningful moral incentive needs to be defined.[81]

The Greenhorns fit this definition of a social movement organization. They are a social movement organization which developed out of the sustainable agriculture and new agrarian movement. The change they seek is clear: "we humans must reform agriculture to survive on this planet." Their stated values include a fundamental belief that "land is the basis of all freedom, and land grounds us in a relationship with ecological truth" They also value small-scale agriculture and local food systems. Their ultimate purpose as stated in their mission is to "promote, recruit, and support new farmers in America." Hence, to understand the Greenhorns' ability as an SMO to recruit

[79] Zald, M. N., & Ash, R." Social movement organizations"329.

[80] Ibid. 329.

[81] Ibid. 330.

individuals, the rhetorical means by which newcomers are put in touch with the organization's values and goals needs to be investigated.

There is a body of scholarship that has provided some general guidelines for how SMO appeals might work rhetorically. In particular, Charles Stewart suggests five functions of social movement rhetoric: "transforming perceptions of history," "transforming perceptions of society," "prescribing courses of action," "mobilizing for action," and "sustaining the movement."[82] Although he never discusses recruitment specifically, the task appears in a number of Stewart's functions of rhetoric in a social movement, particularly in his discussion of the rhetorical functions of "transforming perceptions of history," "prescribing courses of action," and "mobilizing for action." Stewart contends that the first function, "transforming perceptions of history," is often an initial problem that a social movement rhetoric must contend with because target audiences may not even recognize that a problem exists.[83] This is inherently an issue of recruitment because it must be addressed for someone to even consider a movement as valid or necessary and, therefore, worthy of joining. In his assessment of rhetoric that "prescribes a course of action," Stewart pays special attention to the question of who must take that action, implying the need to recruit said people.[84] Finally, in mobilizing for action, Stewart explains that social movement rhetoric must "mobilize target audiences,"

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[82] Charles J. Stewart, "A functional approach to the rhetoric of social movements." *Communication Studies* 31, no. 4 (1980), 302-304.

[83] Ibid. 302.

[84] Ibid. 303.

in other words recruit people to act.[85] While the role of recruitment is clear in these functions, Stewart explains that his discussion is meant to paint in broad strokes about social movements as a whole.[86] By extension, through my investigation of the Greenhorns' recruitment strategies, I aim to understand how these broad functions happen rhetorically at the operational level in a particular social movement organization.

Approaching the conundrums of SMO recruitment through rhetorical lens brings particular benefits. Much of the research focused on SMOs comes from fields such as sociology that study movements as organizations or as structures which mobilize resources and relate to larger networks within social movements. In contrast, I aim to extend the explanatory reach of these concepts by studying not the formal structure of the organization, but the discourses produced by the organization. There is a good theoretical and methodological case for foregrounding the rhetorical aspect of SMO recruitment activities. In his assessment of the discursive dimensions of environmental SMOs, Brulle argues that "changes in social structures are brought about through a redefinition of what constitutes the common sense embodied in the everyday practices of society."[87] He goes on to argue that "[m]ovement discourse also provides a link between collective action and individual beliefs and actions, since in the process of becoming a member of a social movement, individuals experience a transformation in their perceptions of society."[88]

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[85] Ibid. 304.

[86] Ibid. 299.

[87] Brulle, "Environmental discourse and social movement organizations" 61.

[88] Ibid. 62

Tapping into these individual beliefs and actions is a crucial element in the recruitment efforts of an SMO. In order for someone to change their perceptions of society and begin working towards changes in social structures, they must first have their individual beliefs transformed to align with the social movement. They must be persuaded in the rightness of the movement and the possibilities it represents. The question then becomes– how does this occur? What rhetorical strategies and conditions drive this transformation?

My key contention is that to best grasp the transformative potential of the Greenhorns' appeal strategies, we need to focus on the rhetorical concept of identification. Burke's concept of identification is at the root of his and others' theories of persuasion.[89] Applied to the rhetoric of a social movement organization it becomes possible to assess how a potential member moves from mere interest to active engagement with the organization. As Dennis Day explains, Burke sees identification as a necessary precondition for persuasion that creates consubstantiation: "He [Burke] considers things to be "consubstantial" if they are united or identified in a common interest, if they partake in some way of the same "substance."[90] In other words,

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[89] See Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1941/1973), 227; Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950/1969); L. B. Rosenfeld, "Set Theory: Key to the Understanding of Kenneth Burke's use of the Term 'Identification,'" *Western Journal of Communication* 33, no. 3 (1969): 175-783; George Cheney, "On the various and changing meaning of organizational membership: A field study of organizational identification," *Communication Monographs* 50, no. 4 (1983): 342-362.

[90] Dennis G. Day "Persuasion and the Concept of Identification." *The Quarterly journal of speech* 46, no. 3 (1960): 271.

identification is the process by which someone comes to believe that they have something in common with someone else. Without first establishing this commonality, someone has no reason to listen, internalize messages, and be persuaded to become part of the change that social movements seek to create- this is how it becomes possible for an SMO to engage people in its purpose. Thus, assessing how a social movement recruits new members requires an analysis of their initial rhetorical attempts at identification.

Heath et.al. suggest three strategies of identification commonly used by organizations in their efforts to persuade. First, is common ground, described as a "direct associative process [that] allows the rhetor to say in effect: "I am like you" or "I have the same interests as you."[91] Second is antithesis, "a strategy of congregation by segregation, in which the rhetor holds up an antithesis to some thesis being advocated by some group or interest."[92] Essentially antithesis encourages the audience to unite with the rhetor against a common enemy. Finally, transcendence occurs when a rhetor uses a universal "we" or "us" to overcome differences.[93] Cheney explains that this serves as an "appeal to identification between parties who may have little in common."[94] These strategies appear throughout the Greenhorns' materials and work to support recruitment aspects of various

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[91] Robert L. Heath, George Cheney, and Øyvind Ihlen. "Identification: Connection and division in organizational rhetoric and communication." *The Handbook of Organizational Rhetoric and Communication* (2018): 21

[92] Ibid. 21

[93] Ibid. 21.

[94] George Cheney. "The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication." *The Quarterly journal of speech* 69, no. 2 (1983): 149.

functions within this social movement organization. In the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss the three functions of social movement rhetoric most relevant to the Greenhorns' recruitment efforts. Then I discuss how this SMO uses strategies of identification backed by agrarian values to recruit members and the challenges that arise in the process.

Transforming Perceptions of History

Stewart argues that "[t]arget audiences, especially when a social movement is in its infancy, may be unaware of a problem, may refuse to believe that a problem exists, may believe that the problem does not require drastic action."[95] Consequently, movements often need to change the way that people perceive history. For example, recent social movements around race and police brutality in the US have focused on the need to redefine the country's racial history for people who do not understand the historical complexities of systemic racism or the effect it has presently. It might also mean changing the way people understand a particular concept. For example, in his assessment of climate change communication, Branden Johnson[96] suggests that a communicator might be more successful in reaching climate deniers if they successfully

[95] Stewart, "A functional approach to the rhetoric of social movements."302.

[96] Branden B. Johnson. "Climate change communication: A provocative inquiry into motives, meanings, and means." *Risk Analysis: An International Journal* 32, no. 6 (2012): 980.

redefine conversations about climate to remove the scary connotations that come with "climate change."

The Greenhorns too face the task of transforming perceptions of history. However, they have a more complex task than simply challenging previous education or avoiding contentious terms. They rely on agrarianism as a foundational aspect of their ideology, but the violent colonial legacy attached to old agrarianism requires that they carefully attend to this legacy discourse, extracting and highlighting parts they see as valuable to their movement while attempting to address the parts that have caused harm. Essentially, they must transform the perception of agrarianism from two directions: they must persuade people who believe agrarianism is entirely a legacy of evil that it still has utility, and they must persuade people who believe agrarianism is a laudable part of American history that it has caused harm. The complexity of this required transformation offers some interesting possibilities for creating identification, but also poses serious challenges for recruitment.

Throughout their almanacs, the Greenhorns attempt the first transformation of history to establish agrarianism as a useful tool despite its violent past. The first almanac is specifically designed to discuss agrarian histories and their relationship to the current movement. Writing on behalf of the Greenhorns, Severine Von Tscharner Fleming, the founder and director of the Greenhorns acknowledges the rhetorical complexity that the organization needs to contend with: "I'm not forgetting the development agenda, the slavery, the commodification of nature, the subjugation of women. But there are certain

values embedded in this era of history that we can build from."[97] Fleming further tries to handle the organization's rhetorical positionality: "we unwittingly engage with the inherited values of traditional farmers[...] We inherit good and bad, toxic legacies and brilliant designs."[98] In this early work, the Greenhorns recognize that agrarianism and farming in the US are built on violent histories, but they are intent on the idea that there are values and "brilliant designs" they can build from. Fleming seeks to "see if history can give us some clues about what might be possible before we are so quick to dismiss the spirit, the stars, the sacred land practices, the agrarian traditions."[99] Ultimately, Fleming declares, "[t]he challenge therefore is to use history as a tool. To sharpen our wits, to steel our resolve—and to foresee big changes of our own making."[100] Thus we see how the organization begins to transform perceptions of the past; they recognize the problems but focus on emphasizing the perception that there are still things to be gained from agrarian histories.

In later almanacs, Fleming and the Greenhorns continue to exhibit self-awareness in their use of history as an important part of their movement and the necessity to pursue the changes they wish to see. In the 2015 edition they explain:

> As more of us engage in agriculture, and throw down straw, seek local ownership, experience stubborn local holdouts, watch bright stars overhead through twinkling

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[97] Severine V.T. Fleming, ed. 2013. *The new farmer's almanac For the year 2013.* Vol. 1. The Greenhorns 2013. 14.

[98] Ibid. 14.

[99] Ibid. 5.

[100] Ibid. 3

> under-stories of nurture—we become radicalized by what seems possible. An elongated sense of history provides a plentiful repertoire of resistance strategies.[101]

Similarly, in the 2017 almanac Fleming explains why the Greenhorns follow in the footsteps of the old Grange movement. Pointing out that the new headquarters of the Greenhorns are in an old Grange hall, she fleshes out these historical connections: "These places represent a powerful infrastructure for community gatherings[…]As young grangers, young farmers, and rural dwellers, many of us reflexively celebrate the populist vision of our grandmothers."[102] This consistently conscious effort to use history as a reservoir of strategies that can be applied to a modern movement is consistent with Robert Cox's notion of "usable traditions" in which aspects of history are taken up into new ethics.[103] The uptake and rhetorical rendering of such usable traditions is a particularly important theme in the context of recruitment as it is necessary for the Greenhorns to be cautious in the way they use history, especially one with such violence attached to it.

The Greenhorns, of course, cannot correct hundreds of years of history all at once, but they do appear to be sensitive to these issues, actively seeking ways to deal with them as they take up the agrarian tradition and define it as a usable part of their movement. For example, Fleming asks, "Is agrarianism the passageway of empire? Is it the invisible

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[101] Severine V.T. Fleming "Introduction". *The New Farmer's Almanac 2015: Agrarian Technology*. Edited by Charlie Macquarie. Vol. 2.: The Greenhorns 2015. 5.
[102]Severine V.T. Fleming "Introduction" Essay in *The New Farmer's Almanac 2017: Commons*. Edited by Nina Pick. Vol. 3. The Greenhorns 2017. 32.

[103] Cox "Argument and usable traditions."

petticoat holding up the damask bodice of unreasonable power?" She then returns to the question with another question: "But if agriculture is the portal into empire, can it also be a portal out of empire? …Can the emergent and the residual coexist?"[104] These rhetorical questions lay the groundwork for the process of adjusting agrarianism to support a new agrarian ethic that Fleming describes with the following metaphor: "We are squinting, hands on our hips, at the sagging barn to see which beams can bear a new wing. Where can we prop it up? Where should we rip it down for salvage?"[105] In this metaphor, Fleming insists that the role of new farmers is to appraise old agrarian values and make decisions about its future, essentially deciding which parts of the tradition are in fact usable and which ones need to be abandoned.

This approach, although still recognizing problems inherent in agrarianism, encourages a particular perception of history as part of an identification strategy of transcendence. Frequent uses of "us" and "we" encourage identification between the potential farmer reader and the farmer author. Perhaps most importantly, however, it encourages identification not just with the author but with the history of agrarianism that Fleming sketches. She suggests that "we" build from these histories and inherit the values. She uses the words "spirit" and "sacred" in reference to these traditions, thus enticing the reader to feel a spiritual connection to these histories and work on the land. I would argue that such a move makes a reader more likely to feel connected to the movement and integrate these ideas into an identity.

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[104] Fleming, "*The New Farmer's Almanac 2015"* 8.
[105] Fleming, "*The New Farmer's Almanac 2015"* 5-6.

On the other side of this historical perception shaping, later almanacs and other Greenhorns communications moved from largely accepting this colonial legacy to considering ways to address it, going beyond simply acknowledging it to actively working against it. Olson argues that part of "the path to collective survival" is to "restore land and water to the descendants of those from whom it was stolen."[106] The Greenhorns' *Guidebook for Beginning Farmers* argues that "[i]t's vital that we not forget the inequality that persists in modern agriculture; agriculture as we know it in the U.S. would not exist without the labor of undocumented immigrants, and it would not have come to exist without the stolen lives and labor of enslaved black people."[107] Likewise, the Greenhorns' mission statement claims that "transitioning our farming systems is a huge project. It is physical, it is technical, it is spiritual, it is a reparation for the imperialism, thievery and colonial project."[108] Here we see how the Greenhorns attempt to change the perceptions of people who might not already know this history and ensure its problematic aspects are recognized. Such transparency does pose problems for recruitment, however. When they have already worked to build identification via agrarianism as a useful concept, acknowledging the reality of past injustices here might get in the way of appealing to potential recruits. It begs the question, then, can the Greenhorns use agrarianism to undo the harms inherent in old agrarianism?

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[106] Briana Olson. "Editor's Note." In *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. 5: V Grand Land Plan*, edited by Briana Olson, 10–11. Pembroke, ME: The Greenhorns, 2021 11.
[107] Severine V.T. Fleming. *Greenhorns' Beginner's Guide to Getting into Farming*. 3rd ed: The Greenhorns 2020. 21.

[108] "About Greenhorns." Accessed December 14, 2022. https://greenhorns.org/about.

Some argue that it is indeed possible for agrarianism to be used critically. Black agrarianism continues to be an important framework for Black farmers in the US, as Leslie Touzeau suggests it is "an ideology that not only advocates for the virtues of hard work and self-sufficiency, but it is also a form of territorial liberation."[109] Singer argues in an analysis of a documentary about urban farming that the film "performs a critique of whiteness and by doing so arguably contributes to a resistive re-appropriation of agrarian myth."[110] Where colonialism is concerned, La Via Campesina, a growing movement for international agrarian reform with whom the Greenhorns claim to be in community, offers them a concrete way to connect with an organization working towards indigenous rights in the food system. It remains to be seen, however, if the particular colonial history of US agrarianism can coexist with indigenous rights and notions of food sovereignty. It is unclear if an organization founded and run by mostly white US Americans can effectively meet the challenge, they have set for themselves of working towards reparations while hanging on to the agrarian ideology they have built their organization around.

The Greenhorns might fit best with yet another turn in agrarianism towards critical agrarianism. Liz Carlisle calls for what she terms a critical agrarianism in which

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[109] Leslie Touzeau. "" Being Stewards of Land is Our Legacy": Exploring the Lived Experiences of Young Black Farmers." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 8, no. 4 (2019): 48.

[110] Ross Singer. "Visualizing agrarian myth and place-based resistance in South Central Los Angeles." *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2011):345.

"critical agrarians continually question and reshape the very category of agrarian, toward a more just and sustainable future."[111] Critical agrarianism could be an apt definition of what the Greenhorns are working towards. As an organization intentionally and foundationally built around agrarian ideologies, the Greenhorns must work to create messaging that actively moves forward and undoes the racism inherent in old agrarianism. As Rachel Slocum argues,

> Whiteness, capable of endlessly transforming itself, can change its tendency to reproduce and enforce racial oppression. More than that, whiteness has progressive potential. White bodies stick together, thereby making food space exclusive. But these bodies need not be so cohesive, and in some places, as I have suggested, they are not. There is no utility to advocacy that dismisses whiteness and what it brings. What white farmers, feminists and foodies bring to writing, companion species, foodways, land care, regionalism and farmers' markets is imperfect and inarticulate but also productive and part of ethical relating.[112]

Perhaps the notion that Whiteness has progressive potential is the way that the Greenhorns can continue to address and undo the violence that they must grapple with as a result of the history they are associated with. On a practical level, they need to stay relevant as a social movement organization but also on an ideological level they need to avoid creating a new common sense for the movement that reproduces the violence inherent in the histories they draw from. Their messaging suggests that this is what they intend to do as they thread the needle between transforming perceptions of US history in two directions. To what extent they succeed is yet unknown, however I believe that the

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[111] Liz Carlisle. "Critical agrarianism." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 29, no. 2 (2014): 136.

[112]Rachel Slocum. "Whiteness, space and alternative food practice." Geoforum 38, no. 3 (2007): 532.

project of new agrarianism has merit as one approach to solving some of the ecological, political, and social problems of our time. The Greenhorns are also convinced of its utility and use it as a basis for establishing their course of action.

Prescribing a course of Action

In addition to transforming perceptions of history, another function of social movement rhetoric is to prescribe a course of action. According to Stewart, to prescribe a course of action a social movement "must explain, defend, and sell its program for change."[113] Recruitment is very much a part of such course of action prescriptions as it entails deciding who should be a part of this change. The Greenhorns state that their mission is to "promote, recruit, and support new farmers in America" but new agrarianism pushes them towards a wider audience and more complex goals. These require an attempt to build identification with broader audiences which I contend the Greenhorns fail to do, potentially limiting their ability to recruit people into the wider goals of the new agrarian movement.

In their mission statement the Greenhorns begin the work of explaining and defending their goals. They explain that "We believe our agricultural system needs reform, that we need hundreds of thousands more people to join us in the work of agro-ecology, market gardening, urban forestry, agro-forestry, regenerative ranching, ecological restoration, nurseries, orchards, food justice and rural revival." Then, they defend why they believe this work is necessary. They state that:

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[113] Stewart, "A functional approach to the rhetoric of social movements." 303.

> Staggering statistics drive us: 40% of earth's terrestrial ecosystems are made up of farmed land, of which nearly 30% is degraded by unsustainable farming. More than 30% of carbon emissions come from our food system, not to mention pollution, erosion, poison, injustice, habitat destruction, and the undermining of earth's living fabric. 70% of farmland in the US is owned by those over 65 years of age. 98% of rural land is owned by white people. 17% of US children are food insecure.[114]

They suggest that these problems are the crux of why they aim to support new farmers. The progressing age and limited diversity of established farmers supports the need for more farmers generally. The alarming statistics support the need for new sustainable farmers: significant portions of the earth's land are used for farming and much of that farming is unsustainable because it causes ecological problems such as carbon emissions, pollution and erosion as well as social problems such as injustice and food scarcity. This defense is firmly rooted in the new agrarian value of a food system that supports the environment and those who live on the land while their explanation harkens back to old agrarian values such as rural revival. These goals are in fact much more complex than recruiting new farmers. The Greenhorns desire to completely change the agricultural system which requires broad interest and engagement.

Part of how the Greenhorns attempt to attract the many people who will be needed to support this work is by producing materials that are geared towards wide audiences. In

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[114]"About Greenhorns.". Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

general, much of the media such as their documentary film, video series and almanacs are intentionally national and even occasionally international in scale and contribution. This seems to be their primary approach to recruitment, as they explain "We are based in rural Maine where we farm and host programming and campers, but the work is national and international."[115] The Greenhorns desire to reach wide audiences and involve people from many different geographic locations in their work. In the most recent edition of *The New Farmer's Almanac*, writers from all over the US and various international locations are included as contributors. Likewise, their blog and radio show/podcast series focus on specific events, people, and places from all over the US. Even their materials geared towards farming education like guidebooks tend to offer more general information on topics such as affording land, entering sustainable agriculture, cooperative farming and land restoration.

Despite this wide reach however, the Greenhorns seem to focus their rhetorical efforts most explicitly on their audience of potential farmers, using identification to help would-be farmers believe they have a place in the movement. Some are very simple common ground points of identifications such as the opening line "we all eat food" in their most recent guidebook.[116] These might have the effect of creating identification with multiple different audiences but many of the Greenhorns' appeals are much more complex and tailored towards potential farmers explicitly. For example, in the first New

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Fleming, Severine V.T. *Greenhorns' Beginner's Guide,* 4.

Farmer's Almanac Fleming admits that "[w]e are new to these theories. We are amateur practitioners of agrarian culture. Since many of us were born in cities and suburbs, we're slowly acculturating ourselves to agrarian ways predicated more on mutuality than competition."[117] Here Fleming uses common ground, "we were born in cities and suburbs," with transcendence "we are amateur practitioners of agrarian culture" to encourage a would-be farmer to identify with the message. The common ground here acknowledges that the reader likely did not grow up on a farm and helps them understand the similarities between themselves and the author. The transcendence then connects the not yet farmer to the farmer writing, connecting them in the common cause of acculturation into a decidedly new agrarian vision of mutuality over competition.

The Greenhorns continue to use identification in describing their course of action when they use antithesis to delineate who should be part of the movement and who they stand against. The opening passage of the most recent almanac, volume V, very clearly establishes who they desire to include in the movement and who they seek to exclude: "In the time warp of 2020, farmers--not the industrial sort plowing under their surplus acres of green beans and slaughtering their pigs for nothing, but the small scale diversified farmers, the farmers living dreams of a more localized food system, a healthier planet and community-- have emerged as the stalwarts, the envy of many a New Yorker."[118] Here, the "industrial," otherwise known as conventional farmer, is the

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[117] Fleming, *The new farmer's almanac For the Year 2013*,16.

[118] Olson, Briana. "Editor's Note." In *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. V Grand Land Plan*, edited by Briana Olson, 10–11. Pembroke, ME: 2021: 10.

outsider. The unenviable undiversified farmer who implicitly has no dream for the goals the Greenhorns set out here: local food systems bound up in healthier planets and communities. Fleming goes on to explain that "[i]t has been a difficult year, a year of loneliness and loss, but also of shifting perspectives and the kind of possibilities that arise only when change- transformation- is the only option."[119] This use of antithesis builds identification by identifying a common enemy that the reader can unite with the rhetor to overcome. Notably, this identification is still connected explicitly to farmers. The relative lack of attempted identification between the Greenhorns and someone who might fill a different kind of role in the goals of new agrarianism poses a problem for their recruitment.

In addition to recruiting farmers into sustainable agriculture, the Greenhorns intend to recruit non-farmers into beliefs and practices that support farmers and broader sustainable relationships between people and the earth. However, they do not attend to rhetorical strategies that would aid in recruiting these people and at times seem to actively discourage them. Following new agrarian thinking, the Greenhorns claim that this work is for everyone. They explain that farming is not the only way to partake in the work of ecological regeneration and suggest on their website that "[o]ur small towns need new businesses and families, more diversity. Our suburbs need more gardens and orchards, native plantings and runoff mitigation. Our cities need shade and street trees, need drainage basins, need buffering from coastal storms."[120] Likewise, in volume V of

[119] Ibid. 10.

[120] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed December 14, 2022. https://greenhorns.org/about.

the *Almanac*, Fleming calls for government agencies to invest in the work, supporting small, rural businesses, creating programs to train people into the "restorative arts."[121] Calls such as this one are numerous and they mention other potential actors such as government agencies, business people, and broader food system work outside of farming.

All of these things are in line with new agrarian values that include all people working for a more ecologically sound and just food system. However, the strategies of identification required to persuade these people are largely missing and at times the Greenhorns actively contradict themselves. They discuss the capacity for urbanites to be involved in this important work, yet they frequently fall back on the old agrarian values of rural/urban divide asking in the Vol. V *Almanac,* "Will they [urbanite migrants] participate and become active members of their new communities? Are they- are *we*-game for the heavy work ahead?"[122] Note the use of a transcendent "we" that actively excludes the urbanite migrants who, in a time of increasing access to remote jobs have been moving out of the cities. The Greenhorns want the government to be involved and yet they bemoan "our national failure to enact progressive land use policy."[123] These

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[121] Severine V.T Fleming "Introduction." In *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. 5 V. Grand Land Plan*, edited by Briana Olson, Vol. 5. 13-27. Pembroke, ME: The Greenhorns, 2021.
p.16-18)

[122] Briana Olson. "Editor's Note." In *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. V Grand Land Plan*, edited by Briana Olson, 10–11. Pembroke, ME: 2021: 10 emphases in original.

[123] Severine V.T. Fleming. "Introduction" in *The New Farmer's Almanac 2019: The Greater We"*. Edited by Breana Olson 17-26 Vol. 4. The Greenhorns 2017. 21.

moments of tension pose a real threat to the organization's ability to recruit more potential new farmers to their work.

The Greenhorns are very clear in their desire to recruit people into sustainable farming and their rhetorical strategies for prescribing a course of action support this part of their goal. They use the identification strategies of common ground, antithesis and transcendence to help readers identify with their goals and move towards being persuaded by them. However, their goals to change the food system are not well addressed by their strategies of identification. Someone reading these materials who does not intend to farm but wants to be part of the new agrarian agenda of food system and agroecological reform runs the risk of being alienated by contradictory claims about the capacity for nonfarmers and urbanites to be involved in the actions the Greenhorns claim should happen. This issue continues into the final function dealing with recruitment mobilizing for action.

Mobilizing for Action

Finally, the function of mobilizing for action is entwined with recruitment in a social movement. Stewart argues that a social movement does not only change people's perceptions and suggest courses of action; it must also "arouse them to perform a variety of actions" and create and maintain hope within the membership. The Greenhorns do this in multiple appeals to the work of farming where they make the case that potential new farmers should have hope that they can, in fact, do what the Greenhorns call for. Rhetoric that mobilizes for action also goes beyond recruitment into encouraging people once they are already engaged but is part of recruitment insofar as it tells new recruits specifically

what they should be doing and persuades them to believe that doing so is possible. Identification helps build hope and connection with the audience but problems that arose in prescribing a course of action continue here. Broad attempts to appeal to people in many different locations and for various types of work makes these appeals weaker.

The Greenhorns attempt to mobilize action in various places throughout their materials as they call people "to the work." In their mission, they conclude with an invitation: "yes, we need your work, your body, your brain, your heart, your talent. The land needs you, the food system needs you. There are jobs here. Let's get to it."[124] They also state that "[t]ransitioning our farming systems is a multi-generational project. It is physical, it is technical, it is spiritual. This work re-animates our relationship with our home and watershed, helping us tune into the destiny and the immediacy of the land that feeds us." Such inducement to the work occurs in other places as well. In a recent almanac, Fleming asks: "What would it mean if we tried to increase tenfold the actions towards resilience, the training for new farmers and restorative professions?" She then lays out explicitly that "the next decade will be about recruitment -TO THE WORK- of makers of local change, healers of land violations, civil servants, performance artists of restoration in the commons."[125] Throughout the remainder of the introduction, Fleming continues to use rhetorical questions and offers stories showing concrete examples of what "the work" is. For instance, she asks "as more and more of us discover ourselves in the cause of healing, will we reconstitute the kinds of social relations that hold us

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[124] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed October 1, 2020. https://greenhorns.org/about.

[125] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. V*, 14 (emphasis in original)

accountable to the many lives bound up with our own?"[126] She follows this question with stories. She shares examples that answer her own question, highlighting people who restore harbors, work to remove dams, and engage in ecologically responsible food production–those responsive to the lives bound up with ours. Then she answers the first part of the question, sketching the necessary social relations to support the work she hopes to recruit to. She calls for government agencies to invest in the work, supporting small, rural businesses, creating programs to train people into the "restorative arts."[127] "The work" that the Greenhorns wish for people to do has a double meaning. On one hand they are discussing literal work, jobs that people can do to support the new agrarian vision of the world. They want farmers, and restorative professionals, civil servants, artists and others, i.e., people who will do the labor necessary for the changes the movement seeks. However, it is also a figurative call to ideological and rhetorical work that seeks to heal communities and systems and create just food systems. These instances of calling people to work makes it clear that "the work" is a large part of what they aim to recruit into and mobilize.

This kind of recruitment draws directly on modern and historical agrarian discourses. Fleming's arguments for supporting investment in farming and policies that support agriculture while focusing on strong social relations for farmers and rural places harkens to the agrarian work of the Grange movement and the long line of farmer social and political organizing. This thread underwrites the goal of mobilizing new farmers,

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[126] Ibid 7.

[127] Ibid 16-18.

recruiting actual agricultural workers into a strong political and social structure. Finally, the universal ecological turn of the new agrarianism helps them mobilize everyone else. New agrarianism justifies their goals to attract people "to the work." As Olson explains, "[b]ecause what might save the world-and by world I mean the network of wondrous green things, water and gasses, the air we breathe; the ants and worms and bees; life on earth- is this: all of us, ALL, heeding the advice of one of our contributors and starting to think like agroecologists, on and off the farm."[128] New agrarian ideology warrants a commitment not just to the lifestyle, but also to the new food systems, that the Greenhorns champion.

Strategies of identification are profoundly important in this effort to mobilize action. Deploying the transcendent "our" and "we" helps people to see themselves as part of the work that the Greenhorns promote. However, there are some other notable strategies here as well, particularly the second person character in the repeated use of the word "you" in the quote from their mission and the general alignment towards the audience. Using Edwin Black's conception of the second persona, it becomes possible to understand how the audience is being imagined and shaped via agrarian ideology to mobilize for agrarian change. Black argues that "rhetorical discourses, either singly or cumulatively in a persuasive movement, will imply an auditor, and that in most cases the implication will be sufficiently suggestive as to enable the critic to link this implied

[128] Olson, "*The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. V"* 11. (emphasis in original)

auditor to an ideology."[129] He suggests that this happens via the use of "stylistic tokens" that tell a reader/listener how they are to view the world and ultimately suggests "The critic can see in the auditor implied by a discourse a model of what the rhetor would have his real auditor become."[130] In this case, we see how the Greenhorns imply an audience member who is ready to mobilize to the work of farming and ecological repair under the ideology of agrarianism. Their focus on hard work coupled with reference to spirituality and healing models their ideal agrarian actor- someone ready to step and do the labor necessary for the movement while committing their spirit and believing the ideology of agrarianism. It is not simply enough for someone to take the jobs they assert are available they must be part of the movement as well.

The work of mobilizing audiences also occurs in the Greenhorns visual media. For example, one of their first ever productions was a documentary film in 2010 which focused on a variety of sustainable young or beginning farmers and how they fit into their local food systems. The film strings together interviews with a variety of young farmers in both urban and rural settings discussing the difficulties and rewards of farming. Connecting these interviews are brief explanations of political systems and policy choices that have caused farming to become what it is today According to the website:

> It is the filmmaker's hope that by broadcasting the stories and voices of these young farmers, we can build the case for those considering a career in agriculture – to embolden them, to entice them, and to recruit them into farming. The

[129] Edwin Black. "The Second Persona." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970): 111

[130] Ibid 113

> production of The is part of our grassroots nonprofit's larger campaign for agricultural reform.[131]

This film serves to highlight and encourage different ways of growing the new agrarian future that the Greenhorns seek to establish. The people featured in this documentary take up agrarianism as a way of life and the documentary presents these multiple ways of enacting this rhetoric to those who encounter it. Media like this is particularly important for mobilizing action because it establishes a variety of approaches that allow people to connect with the concepts. And the nature of this type of media makes it more likely for someone to become interested. As evidenced in media research such as Ashly Bieniek-Tobasco et.al's findings that "documentary storytelling can generate concern and desire to take action."[132]

The Greenhorns make strides towards effective recruitment in the mobilization aspect of agrarian recruiting in that they sufficiently illustrate the action they are mobilizing- work, both physical, and ideological, in the movement and offer some descriptions of how this should happen. However, there are some limitations in their mobilization. First, as in their prescription for a course of action they are overall more specific about what someone who wishes to farm should do than what someone who might fill one of the other roles should take on. Additionally, and perhaps more

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[131] The Greenhorns. n.d. "The Greenhorns (2010) Documentary Film DVD." Greenhorns. Accessed July 2, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/product/the-greenhorns-2010-documentary-film-dvd/.

[132] Ashley Bieniek-Tobasco, Sabrina McCormick, Rajiv N. Rimal, Cherise B. Harrington, Madelyn Shafer, and Hina Shaikh. "Communicating climate change through documentary film: Imagery, emotion, and efficacy." Climatic Change 154 (2019): 13

importantly, their wide audience makes this a more difficult task, even for the more fleshed out potential farmers audience. “The work” in Minnesota will be very different from the work in Texas. There is no way for a national organization to offer sufficient specificity for farmers in various regions or nonfarmers in different political and social contexts. Thus, even if someone is effectively recruited from a perspective of understanding history in the way the greenhorns describe it and agreeing with the course of action and ideology of the movement, it is possible that lack of specific information for how they should act in their home contexts will prevent someone from doing the work, especially the actual labor of the movement as job opportunities may not in fact be available in the way the Greenhorns suggest.

Chapter Conclusions

The Greenhorns use the concept of agrarianism as an integral part of their social movement rhetoric, and it contributes significantly to their capacity for recruitment. Of the functions of social movement rhetoric that Stewart proposes three, transforming perceptions of history, prescribing a course of action, and mobilizing for action, are particularly salient for understanding recruitment. The Greenhorns new agrarian ideology figures as an important aspect of each one, offering significant capacity for building identification with the audience and figuring them as the movement actors the Greenhorns need to achieve their goals. However, it does pose some challenges. The complex violent history of US agrarianism makes it a risky history to rely on as it risks creating a new common sense that does not adequately work towards justice for these

historical wrongs. Additionally, the wide audience of new agrarianism makes appealing to all the relevant movement actors difficult and the greenhorns focus on rural farmers specifically to the detriment of the wider set of movement interlocutors they claim to involve.

Understanding how the Greenhorns' recruitment strategies negotiate the historical legacies of agrarianism contributes to environmental communication studies in a number of ways. First, it adds to a growing body of research about the intersections of agrarianism and the environmental concerns related to agriculture. By focusing on the recruitment efforts of a modern agrarian farmer SMO, we see how the discourse is taken up, demonstrating the potential uses of agrarian ideology in the context of a social movement. However, it also demonstrates potential pitfalls of the idea illustrating possible ramifications of agrarian praxis. Furthermore, research about how the Greenhorns use the concept and associated ideology contemporarily, increases our knowledge about how the idea has evolved and its capacity for changing the way humans interact with the rest of the living world via food and agriculture. This research demonstrates that agrarianism is a powerful ideology for encouraging farming and that agrarianism remains an important discourse among farmers. It also shows that new agrarianism has the potential to take hold to rearrange how people view their connection to the web of existence as well as the farming communities that sustain them. The following chapters of this dissertation will assess the role of new agrarianism in other aspects of SMO rhetoric, in particular education and movement maintenance.

Chapter Three: Agrarian Education

In this chapter I explore the educational materials through which the Greenhorns produce knowledge and pass skills on to their recruits. As the previous chapter established, recruiting new farmers was not just a matter of getting people interested in this form of labor but also getting them to buy into a particular version of agrarian ideology, which I understand as a world view crafted to encourage alignment with the movement and movement goals. In my analysis of the training materials that this SMO produces, therefore, I am interested in the way the Greenhorns (re)produce the knowledge and skills that are necessary to put their vision into practice. For that purpose, I contend, we need to consider how information functions rhetorically.

Central to the Greenhorns' goal as an organization is giving new farmers the information, skills, and disposition they need to be successful and enculturated into sustainable agriculture. At first sight, many of their guidebooks, blog posts and podcast episodes seem to focus on providing information that is purely practical. They focus on necessary farming skills that are required to create the sustainable farmscape the Greenhorns wish to achieve. However, the organization’s goals are not simply practical; embedded in their work is an inherently rhetorical desire to create a particular culture and way of life that sustains the sustainable agriculture movement. The Greenhorns build from agrarian history and strive for an ideal future which requires teaching new farmers a different way of relating to the land, themselves and each other. The organization offers practical educational materials with embedded ideological guidance that furthers the larger movement toward sustainable farming and develops agrarianism as a central part

of the movement. Farmer education has long been a priority in the U.S. and the Greenhorns step into a history of education designed not only to keep farmers up to date on technical information but also to maintain agrarian values that support the social and economic lives of farmers and rural communities. Likewise, they are part of a rich history of social movement knowledge production that has been an area of study across disciplines.

In what follows, I offer a historical context of agricultural education in the United States and consider how the Greenhorns align with and diverge from this history to (re)produce knowledge and indoctrinate sustainable farmers through their educational materials. In particular, I focus on the ways that they teach practical skills and build confidence, how they create a worldview by developing a new agrarian ethic, and the praxis that they encourage by constituting the activist farmer and encouraging a particular approach to engaging with nonhumans. I argue that ultimately the Greenhorns follow the tradition of agricultural education in the U.S. by relying on agrarian values; however, the social movement context and attention to the wellbeing of all–humans and nonhumans–diverge from more traditional forms of agricultural education. Evaluating these materials contributes to the ongoing discussions about new agrarian rhetoric as well as social movement learning and advances ideas for rhetorical theory about how rhetorical criticism can account for nonhuman actors in the ecological turn.

Historical Context of Agricultural Education and its Connection to Agrarianism/Farmer Social Movements

Agricultural education has a deep history in the United States. From a U.S. policy perspective, it has long been a priority. In 1853 Justin Smith Morrill, Senator of Vermont, introduced a bill arguing for the creation of colleges in each state using the funds from sales of previously stolen lands held by the federal government. This bill, which was initially vetoed but signed into law by the subsequent administration in 1862, became known as the Morrill Land-Grant Act. This bill directed that the funds in each state be used for:

> the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.[133]

Most of these colleges are now public colleges and universities offering a wide range of programs of education, but which continue to do agricultural education and research.

[133] *Morrill Act* (1862) 7 U.S. Code § 304.

Subsequent federal government policy established agricultural experiment stations,[134] extension education systems,[135] and high school level agricultural education.[136]

Within this context of federal and often state investment in agricultural education, a variety of educational programs developed in the early part of the 20th century, which established foundations for how agricultural education operates today. For instance, various organizations organized corn clubs which encouraged farm boys to grow the highest possible yield of corn with the fewest inputs on one acre. The first such corn club was organized by a businessman in Illinois as a way to encourage involvement in the county farmer's institute as well as to boost sales in seed corn. Such corn clubs were very popular and were picked up by schools and county extension educators over time.[137] These clubs, according to an organization responsible for organizing them at the time, were designed explicitly to, among other things, "encourage more intensive farming" and to "offer a medium through which vocational guidance, inspiration, information, and careful direction can be given to the average boy now in rural life." They also aimed to "teach the value of [...] the need of a broader education for the farming population" and "assist the teacher and the public schools to find an easy approach, educationally, to all

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[134] *Hatch Act* (1887) 5 U.S. Code§ 7321–7326.

[135] *Smith-Lever Act* (1914) 7 U.S. Code § 343.

[136] *Smith-Hughes Act* (1917) 20 U.S. Code §§11-14, and subsequent investments in most US policy dealing with high school education.

[137] Cassandra Uricchio, Gary Moore, and Michael Coley. "Corn Clubs: Building the Foundation for Agricultural and Extension Education." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 54, no. 3 (2013), 226.

the interests of rural and village life."[138] Such clubs were an important development that eventually fed into national organizations such as the FFA (Future Farmers of America Organization), which still operates in school districts across the country.[139] According to Uricchio, Moor and Coley, "Boys' clubs were the most effective way of convincing farmers of the value of new agricultural practices, while also educating the future generation of farmers."[140] The authors go on to argue that these early models developed into the project-based and experiential learning that is a cornerstone of many modern agricultural education programs and suggest that some of the corn club practices could be reintroduced to modern programs such as competition and local school fairs to recognize students' achievement in agriculture.

From the start, these educational opportunities were a joint project between counties, schools, agribusiness, and local farmer organizations to support the next generation of farmers and to inculcate young farmers with the values and education that this cohort of interested parties deemed important. John Hillson and Brad Bryant suggest that "early agricultural societies developed as a way for farmers, or others interested in farming and rural life, to improve agricultural production as well as conserve the land."[141]

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[138] Ibid. 228.

[139] John D Tummons, Jon C. Simonsen, and Michael J. Martin. "Role of the Agricultural Industry and Judging Events in Formation of the Future Farmers of America." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 58, no. 1 (2017): 236-250.

[140] Ibid. 233.

[141]John Hillison and Brad Bryant. "Agricultural Societies as Antecedents of the FFA." J*ournal of Southern Agricultural Education Research* 51, no. 1 (2001): 111

Notably, as evidenced in the list of educational goals above, this education was grounded in agrarian values. The goal was to not only educate young farmers about agricultural best practices, but also emphasize the value of rural and village life. These values were further documented in creeds, or statements of belief and values, of various organizations at the time. The Country Boy's Creed, a requirement for those earning a degree through the future farmers of Virginia emphasized the beauty of nature, extolled the value of hard work, and asserted that "that life is larger and freer and happier on the farm than in the town.[142] The Grange movement also had a creed, opening with the statement: "I believe in the goodness of rural life; I will do what I can do to make it still better."[143] Likewise, although not stated as a creed, the Farmer's Union of America, which still persists today, listed education and favorable economic policies among their purposes in their 1902 application for charter, concluding with the purpose: "To garner the tears of the distressed, the blood of martyrs, the laugh of innocent childhood, the sweat of honest labor and the virtue of a happy home as the brightest jewels known."[144] Each of these statements reproduce the agrarian ideology and tie the educational goals of these organizations to larger agrarian purposes that center the social value of rural life and economies.

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[142] James J. Connors, and Jonathan Velez. "I Believe in the Future of Agriculture: Historical Perspectives of the FFA Creed." *Proceedings of the AAAE Research Conference* 34 (2007): 348

[143] Hillison and Bryant. "Agricultural Societies as Antecedents of the FFA." 109.

[144] Ibid 107.

Efforts at agricultural education persist today and the values embedded in early programs continue to influence this education. As Hillson and Bryant conclude "previous agricultural societies and youth clubs played a role in the development of the FFV [Future Farmers of Virginia] and FFA."[145] For instance, the FFA remains as one of the largest organizations offering agricultural education to high school students in the US. The FFA creed has changed only somewhat in its 85 years of use and its current iteration includes a variety of agrarian themes such as the social value of agricultural work and importance of leadership coming from farmers, as well as the idea that farming and agriculture are a central part of US history and identity and an important part of its future. Likewise, the National Farmers Union, which operates chapters in 33 states, includes education as one of its 3 core goals along with legislation and cooperation which support their fundamental beliefs that "good opportunities in production agriculture are the foundation of strong farm and ranch families, and strong farm and ranch families are the basis for thriving rural communities. Vibrant rural communities, in turn, are vital to the health, security and economic well-being of our entire national economy."[146] Thus the point of agricultural education goes beyond teaching the required skills for effective farming. In both of these instances, agricultural education is also oriented to making communities stronger and valuing the unique palace of farmers in the US.

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[145] Ibid. 111.

[146] "About US - National Farmers Union." National Farmers Union - United to Grow Family Agriculture, August 26, 2022. https://nfu.org/about/.

It is clear that historically and currently, agricultural education has served two goals: providing technical education to ensure that people have the necessary skills to succeed in farm industries and extending social identity work rooted in agrarian values. Historically, educators grappled with the changing modes of agriculture, realizing that it was easier to educate young people than to convince older farmers to change their practices. As the population of the U.S. increased and demand for agricultural products boomed, especially during times of war, these programs were essential for teaching upcoming farmers how to increase yields and keep a growing nation fed. As industrialization surged, the exigence of a growing demand for food was compounded by the migration of people out of rural areas into urban centers. The agrarian values that lauded rural living and encouraged farm work as morally superior encouraged people to remain farming in rural communities even if opportunities for easier or more lucrative work existed in urban centers. Consequently, as agricultural education has modernized, the field has grown to include a wider range of agricultural and related career paths.[147] Still, it continues to rely on agrarian values of lauding rural life, securing farmer economic stability and the cultural and economic importance of work in agriculture. Additionally, modern agricultural education now focuses on encouraging people who may not have been involved in agriculture before to enter agricultural career paths. Where early agricultural education programs were designed to increase adoption of new technologies among existing farmers and encourage young farmers to remain in farming,

[147] For example, FFA content now includes a variety of food related career options such as agribusiness, natural resource management, and biotechnology among others in addition to traditional agricultural endeavors such as crop and livestock production.

modern agricultural education is tasked with not only supporting existing farmers but also encouraging those whose families are not already working in agricultural sectors to choose agricultural career paths.

In these prior and ongoing efforts to educate farmers, three primary rhetorical challenges emerge. First, educators need a way to persuade people to change and update their methods when different approaches become available. Second, educators as well as rural communities and businesses have an interest in keeping farmers and farm families in rural areas and helping them thrive so as to protect the economic and cultural vitality of farming towns outside of urban areas. As agricultural education modernized and rural populations declined, a new exigence emerged; the need to encourage people who did not have an immediate family history of work in agriculture to enter this field of work and become enculturated into agrarian ways of being. My research enters this space to assess how one contemporary organization, the Greenhorns, address this new exigence as part of their social movement work.

Social Movement Learning

The Greenhorns' educational materials also serve these multiple purposes but their explicit focus on new and beginning farmers, environmental sustainability, and connection to a particular social movement sets them apart in modern agricultural education. Although high school programs and extension education include sustainable agriculture, they are also expected to offer educational services that cater to large agribusiness, turf grass management, corn and soy production and large scale animal

agriculture. These are state sponsored education programs that ultimately serve the status quo. The Greenhorns, conversely, work outside of state structures and are not required to compromise their vision of a sustainable future for the benefit of industrial agriculture. As a social movement organization, the Greenhorns have the opportunity to offer a selection of materials that explicitly support their movemental goals which are typically aligned against many of the goals of mainstream agricultural education. The Greenhorns case presents an opportunity for scholars of agrarianism to explore agricultural education within the context of a social movement, offering insights into new agrarian social movement making in addition to agricultural education. The social movement context of the Greenhorns poses a unique challenge because it necessitates that they teach practical farming knowledge to those who have little background in agriculture as well as a transformative ideology at the same time. Literature from social movement learning helps explain how social movements do this type of work.

Not only do the Greenhorns have a unique approach to agricultural education because of their sustainability lens, but their structure as a social movement also allows them to approach education from different avenues that are not necessarily available to formal education systems. The way that they combine agricultural education with movement making is an example of social movement learning. Arising from the field of adult education, research on social movement learning studies how social movements educate the network of people who join them. According to Hye-Su Kuk and Rebecca

Tarlau,[148] "interactions that lead to shared agendas necessitate participants learning from one another through both informal (e.g., participating in rallies, reading leaflets) and nonformal processes (e.g., teach-ins, educational programmes)." A central theory for understanding social movement learning is "cognitive praxis" a term popularized by Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison to explain the process by which social movements share and develop knowledge and worldviews. Eyerman and Jamison contend that social movements are "best conceived of as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities, and even ideals."[149] They further suggest that knowledge is not only formalized academic or scientific knowledge, it is "the broader cognitive praxis that informs all social activity" and is a foundational element of social movements.[150] They also argue that "social movements create new types of knowledge as well as recombine or connect previously separate types of knowledge with each other."[151] This framework for understanding social movement learning is useful for assessing the work of the Greenhorns because it encourages attention to not only how this organization teaches technical skills but also how it transforms agrarianism and the

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[148] Hye-Su Kuk, and Rebecca Tarlau. "The confluence of popular education and social movement studies into social movement learning: A systematic literature review." *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 39, no. 5-6 (2020): 591.

[149]Ron Eyerman, and Andrew Jamison. *Social movements: A cognitive approach*. (Penn State Press, 1991), 4.

[150] Ibid. 49.

[151] Ibid. 49.

movement as a whole by teaching people how to think, believe and act in accordance to the goals of the movement.

Approaching social movements as collective knowledge production fora is also helpful for understanding the relationship between new agrarian movement making and old agrarianism. The basic idea is that social movement learning and cognitive praxis are part of a larger academic debate about the role of education in social movements and how "new" vs "old" social movements function and approach education. Kuk and Tarlau lay out in their literature review that adult education scholars have engaged in a lively debate about the nature of learning in "old" and "new" social movements. They ultimately argue that these debates functioned as their own movement leading to the proliferation of social movement learning research. Kuk and Tarlau highlight the divergent views of scholars who study "old" social movements, defined as more traditional top down movements associated with state action like political parties and labor organizing. Those who study new social movements that developed in the late 60s and continue as the more prominent form of social movement today appear to be less structured and focus more on social identities and communicative action.

Matthias Finger argues that the role of education is one important part of the difference between old and new social movements. He contends that old movements were primarily "struggling for the ideals of the Enlightenment and modernity (justice, liberty, equality, emancipation)"[152] and that education in such movements relied on

[152] Matthias Finger. "New social movements and their implications for adult education." *Adult Education Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1989): 17.

teaching people how to meet these goals. He concludes that "such education is most effective if it is structured and programmed."[153] He goes on to explain that new movements work from the perspective that politics and the ideals of old movements have largely failed, and that change must come from the individual. Thus, new movements "first redefine the aim of education, which is no longer to achieve societal goals, but to induce a process of personal transformation, which, they think, will inevitably have an impact on social, political, and cultural life."[154] Education in this way is fundamentally constitutive, it creates subjects and ideology simultaneously. My analysis of the Greenhorns' educational materials echoes some of Finger's assessment of new social movements' educational work. However, I also find that the Greenhorns do not entirely write off the project of old agrarianism. Agrarianism functioned in old social movements to support their goals but is not an old social movement on its own. It is a collection of ideas that can be picked up across time and space and can be applied to new movement education.

This tension, that new and old social movements are not truly separate, is addressed in the literature on social movement learning. Some scholars have argued against these categories, insisting that the juxtaposition is not accurate or useful. Notably, John Holst argues that "the OSM/NSM dichotomy had fundamental flaws and no longer

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[153] Ibid. 18.

[154] Ibid. 18.

reflects qualitative changes in the socio-political economic realities"[155] He goes on to argue that part of why this dichotomy is no longer useful is because new and old social movements are "tangled." Activists often inhabit both at once or over the course of their time in activism and new social movements are often tied to or at least carry the memory of old social movements.[156] Holst does suggest, however, that there are a few theoretical elements that are worth saving from the old/new social movement dichotomy. Notably, he argues that researchers should "accept the fact that we are in an era of profound socio-political economic transformation."[157] The claim is that contemporary social movements are both transformational and rely on historical echoes. As Eyerman and Jamison note, although social movements create new knowledge, they also take up existing knowledge.[158]

In rhetorical terms this debate could be approached via Robert Cox's concept of usable traditions which Cox builds from existing rhetorical theory by referencing Aristotle's concept of doxa. Andrea Deciu Ritivoi explains that "Aristotle distinguished doxa as opinion, from episteme as certainty. … he also identified specific cultural, social (or what we call ideological) assumptions based on which the premise of an argument can

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[155] John D. Holst "From radical adult education to social movement learning." *The Palgrave international handbook on adult and lifelong education and learning* (2018): 80.

[156] Ibid. 83.

[157] Ibid. 85.

[158] Eyerman and Jamison. "*Social movements: A cognitive approach*." 49

be seen as plausible and be agreed upon by the members of a particular community."[159] Turning to doxa allows Cox to discuss the use of what might be understood as common knowledge. Cox also discusses what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyttecha call dissociation, which Frank summarizes as "a rhetorical process of deconstructing and reconstructing associative links between and among concepts and philosophical pairs with argumentation."[160] Cox's notion of "usable traditions" combines these two concepts to explain how an arguer might use doxa and dissociation together to create a new warrant. As Cox puts it,

> the redress of economic and class inequities, or amelioration of the environment for example, may require practices that rely upon new ethics or warrants. Yet, such warrants-- if they are to gain a public hearing--cannot be totally invented; they must be grounded in cultural traditions that, in turn, underlie existing practices[161]

Cox coins the term "usable tradition" to describe the traditions that new warrants are grounded in. Essentially, to create the type of future sought by social movements, existing ideas, traditions, and histories must be somehow incorporated into new arguments. This idea supports Holst's position that the new/old dichotomy is flawed. Likewise, Cox aligns with the assessment from cognitive praxis that the formation of new ideas sometimes entails the uptake of existing knowledge. Cox describes three ways a usable tradition becomes incorporated into new arguments:

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[159] Andrea Deciu Ritivoi. *Paul Ricoeur: Tradition and innovation in rhetorical theory*. SUNY Press, 2006. 50

[160] David, A. Frank. (2020). The Origins of and Possible Futures for Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's Dissociation of Concepts. *Philosophy & Rhetoric,* 53(4), 385

[161] Cox. "Argument and usable traditions." 93.

> (1) extension of warrants of a central tradition to new areas; (2) the substitution of neglected or minority traditions as warrant; or, in a more radical sense, (3) a critical or dialectical use of the past in which argument 'dissociates' the foundational warrants themselves.[162]

As I will elaborate in the following section, each of these ways of mobilizing a usable tradition shows up in the work of the Greenhorns, especially in their educational endeavors. Given this theoretical background, it becomes possible to evaluate how the Greenhorns create and share agricultural and agrarian knowledge through the processes of social movement learning/teaching to produce people who are not only capable of entering farming with little experience in agriculture but also who are able to perpetuate a social movement for sustainable agriculture.

Social Movement Learning by the Greenhorns

In the following sections, I l analyze the Greenhorns' educational materials and assess how they enter the tradition of agricultural education with the new goal of educating potential farmers within their social movement context. First, I analyze what kinds of practical skills they teach and how they are presented for potential farmers with no background in farming. Then, Using Cox's notion of usable traditions I show how the Greenhorns use agrarianism to develop a new agrarian ethic. Finally, I consider two ways that the Greenhorns encourage praxis: how they constitute activist farmers and how their approach demonstrates new ways of interacting with nonhumans. In each section, I offer

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[162] Ibid. 94.

examples spanning the breadth of the organization's materials. However, I use the most recent edition of their guidebook "Greenhorn's *Beginner's Guide to Getting into Farming*, written by Greenhorns' founder Severine Fleming, as a primary material showing how their most recent work develops agrarian social movement learning along various dimensions. There are three editions of this guidebook, and it was one of the first concrete educational materials produced by the organization designed for aspiring farmers across the U.S. The most recent edition departs from the standard written format of past editions and is presented as a multimedia guide which includes links to videos, outside resources and more. Described as a "guidebook about getting into agriculture" on the website, it is "about tuning in, finding the path, finding consonance, and weighing all the co-factors that will allow you to 'rule your destiny' and design a place for yourself on the land."[163] This guidebook is the Greenhorns' introduction to the education they believe is necessary for someone to become a farmer and an activist in the sustainable agriculture movement.

Practical Skills

Following the long history of agricultural education in the US, part of the Greenhorns' mission is giving farmers practical knowledge to enter sustainable agriculture. However, these skills are not presented stripped of affect. Much of the guidance offered by the Greenhorns is couched in emotional appeals that invoke a sense of courage. They seem designed to help the reader feel capable of making the major life

[163] "Guidebook Series." The. The Greenhorns, Accessed November 28, 2020. https://Greenhorns.org/guidebook-series/.

change required to begin farming with no prior experience. If the Greenhorns' main goal is to encourage new entrants into farming, then their audience is primarily people with little to no practical knowledge about farming or even how to get into farming. Rather, their audience is a population of people who don't know what they don't know. There are a variety of emotions that might come up for someone who is so new to farming when they consider changing careers. Fear, anxiety, apathy, even embarrassment are potential negative emotions that might get in the way of someone learning how to become a farmer. By presenting information coated in reassurance, excitement, and encouragement, the Greenhorns work to both share important basic knowledge and affectively support potential farmers.

The first section of the *Beginner's Guide to Getting into Farming*, "Landing on the Land" describes some of the most basic knowledge an aspiring farmer needs to have, but it does so with particular attention to encouraging the reader to feel capable and optimistic. Fleming insists that feeling this way is possible "even if you're stuck in a two-bedroom apartment in the city."[164] The use of the word "stuck" acknowledges that the reader might be feeling encumbered by a lack of capacity given a dearth of practical or cultural knowledge about farming. Validating what is likely the first counter argument one may have to stepping into farming while insisting that it is possible, nonetheless allows the reader to overcome those initial doubts. At the end of the section, Fleming speaks to the reader insisting, "enjoy yourself!" She explains that "[t]he point is not to

[164] Fleming, *Greenhorns' Beginner's Guide to Getting into Farming*, 6.

learn everything there is to know, but to start thinking like someone whose decisions are based on the needs and capacities of the land around them - that is the job of the ecological farmer."[165] This offers another counterpoint to the potential anxiety that someone with no practical or cultural experience with farming might feel about the prospect of entering the field. It is a reminder that there is joy to be had in learning and exploring something new and validates the reality that the intended reader will know little if anything about farming. This quote also previews the ideological work happening in the guidebook which I will discuss in the next section.

In the first chapter, called "Landing on the Land," Fleming encourages aspiring farmers to develop a sense of place. She asks the reader to look at a satellite map of their area and consider the land use and watershed and links to a native land map where the reader can see whose land they are on. In addition to simply knowing the geography and history of the land, Fleming encourages getting to know the soil, offering concrete ways of doing so, such as reaching out to the USDA National Resources Conservation Service, local extension offices and other centers that can help a reader fully understand the land they are on. Fleming establishes this as the first thing aspiring farmers must learn. They cannot begin to farm without understanding the soil, waterways and community they plan to farm in.

Chapter Two in the guidebook, titled "Basic Pathways," focuses more explicitly on education, teaching the reader how to begin farming. The first section of the chapter "Learn from your Laptop" is almost exclusively made of links to other resources

[165] Ibid. 6.

explaining that "this guide is meant to help point you in the right directions, in order to find media and information that suits your interest, your style, and your context."[166] The categories of links include: "Classes and Online Organizational Resources," "Videos and Lectures on Farms and Food," "Podcasts and Media," and "Instructional videos and Resources." Many of the resources listed are external to the Greenhorns, such as institutes, extension and other farmer organizations. However, they also link to some of their own media such as their podcasts, and a website called "Farmhacks" that was created by the Greenhorns. This shows that part of the Greenhorns' goal is to teach aspiring farmers how to find information they need. The guidebook is never presented as a complete guide to farming and their emphasis on further reading and outside resources is an important element of the education they offer. This guidebook is not only a guide to farming but a guide to farming research, which is repeatedly mentioned as an important element of getting into farming.

Despite its overwhelming focus on practical knowledge, even this section includes emotional appeal meant to ease the reader into farming. Writing at the height of COVID lockdowns, Fleming acknowledges that "[t]hese restrictions, on top of so many other constraints, makes starting to farm or garden daunting."[167] Then she offers the counterpoint: "[b]ut the restriction provides an opportunity for a valuable idea to germinate: farming in place."[168] Again, the author acknowledges the negative emotions

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[166] Ibid. 10.

[167] Ibid. 12.

[168] Ibid. 12.

associated with a big change such as entering a new career as daunting, and then encourages a change in mindset from fear (farming is daunting) to curiosity (farming is an opportunity). In doing so, she allows the reader to feel empowered to receive and apply the information that the Greenhorns provide with less anxiety about the changes.

The more direct educational materials continue into the next section of chapter two called "Give it a Try for the Season." In this section Fleming explains that it is important to work on a farm as an apprentice or farm hand to learn practical skills and get a sense for what working on a farm can really feel like. Although it is important to do this work, Fleming acknowledges that this kind of position pays very little and may not be available to those without the ability to take a serious pay cut, even when on-farm lodging is common for farm interns. She suggests that if it isn't possible to take on a whole season, there are other ways of gaining on farm experience such as visiting, camping or volunteering.[169] For those who plan to work an entry level farm job, the remainder of the section describes in greater detail what to expect, how to plan, and how to secure an apprenticeship or farm worker job. This information is very honest and practical. Fleming reinforces that farming is difficult work which requires physical and mental fortitude along with the willingness to work in difficult conditions with little to no pay, especially at this level. She also explains how to prepare: saving money, ending a lease if you need to move, learning how to make food and selling/storing nonessential things if you plan to live on a farm. Finally, she offers practical advice for finding,

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[169] Ibid. 14.

applying to and preparing for a season of farming as an apprentice or intern, down to what items to bring.[170] After these tips, there are a variety of resources for finding apprenticeships and support for young farmers.

The "Give it a Try for the Season" section contains the most condensed practical advice, but its formatting makes it approachable and a few inclusions of uplifting, more emotional appeals help balance the information. Much of this section appears in the form of bullet points and short paragraphs making it easy to understand. Information such as this can be overwhelming. Condensing it down to essential points gives the reader an easy way to start. Additionally, a few lines that break away from more direct advice helps to remind the reader why they might be interested in this work. About halfway down the page in a bullet point list titled "What to Expect," Fleming inserts two lines that break away from practical things above them. After explaining that most farm jobs include on-farm housing, food, and kitchen, Fleming adds: "You will meet really awesome people who care a lot about what they do." and "You will get healthy and strong and be well fed and surrounded by birdsong."[171] These inclusions are somewhat unexpected and break up the barrage of advice and information above and below it. It serves as a reminder to the reader that there are beautiful, emotionally fulfilling things to look forward to in this line of work. It also inspires them to carry on through the complicated logistical challenges of finding a place to learn how to farm.

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[170] Ibid. 14.

[171] Ibid. 14.

In addition to information about finding on-farm work, the final two sections of the chapter titled “A Job in the Food Sector” and “Urban Farming” provide information about other sectors and allow for a broader potential audience. Both of these sections offer alternative routes to jobs in the food system outside of traditional rural farming. “A Job in the Food Sector” offers a list of jobs other than farming such as value added food production (think cheese, pickles, etc.), food and agricultural justice work, work in land conservation, and other jobs that relate to agriculture as well as links to organizations and resources about this kind of work. Similarly, the “Urban Farming” section includes information on how to find and get involved with urban farm work along with further resources about the topic. These are again mostly practical and carry on the same formatting choices from the previous section. Although they do not contain the same types of emotional appeals as previous sections or chapters, they do serve a very important function. They keep people involved if they realize that direct on-farm work isn’t an option. It would be easy for someone to write off the organization and movement if they decided that actual farming wasn't for them. By intentionally including other food work and urban farming, Fleming still captures people who might agree ideologically but can’t practically take on the work of farming or move to a rural place where more traditional farming takes solace. It allows the audience to be larger than the narrow group of people ready and willing to commit to rural farming.

The final chapter of the guidebook is titled “Thinking Differently about Agriculture.” Each section of the chapter discusses a different potential business model for new farmers to explore, including basics of the model and resources for further

exploration. The first section, "Multi-Party Agroforestry" discusses potential partnerships between landowners and those who want to farm long term tree crops "Agroforestry can include nitrogen-fixing trees, trees grown for animal fodder, trees grown to be regeneratively cut and used for crafts or mulch, and trees useful as nurse crop to support the young plantings."[172] One of the major problems with entering this type of agriculture is that these crops take many years to begin producing, thus the multi-party aspect of the chapter. The following section "Land Access and Land Trusts" discusses other ways to "link farmers to the land."[173] Interestingly, this section moves somewhat away from the audience the rest of the guidebook has been aimed at, namely people interested in entering agriculture who don't have access to land. It instead approaches those who have land or are related to people with land who need resources for connecting that land to a farmer. Although the section offers resources for accessing a variety of types of land trust, they focus on Agrarian Commons, and highlight the work of the sister organization Agrarian Trust in "making farmland affordable and accessible to those who take on the work of locally oriented farming."[174] The final section "Restoration, Reparation, and Driving Food Justice" focuses on the role of the farmer in justice issues. Fleming suggests that "the first step in taking reparative action is to self-educate."[175] Here Fleming

[172] Ibid. 18.

[173] Ibid. 19.

[174] Ibid. 19.

[175] Ibid. 22.

ties these big picture ideologies to the imagination of a potential farmer. Although the main point of the section is about large systemic issues, Fleming is positioning it as a necessary element of farmer knowledge and action, making education in this context not only about the technicalities of farming but also about the larger contexts and systems that require change.

In the final section, the Greenhorns move towards teaching not just knowledge of farming but also highlighting the bigger picture goals of the organization and how readers should feel about them. The Greenhorns continue to anticipate and respond to potential reader anxieties around doing something new to encourage them to continue learning but expand what they are teaching signaling a movie towards encouraging movement participation not just entering farming. In the final section for example, Fleming reminds the reader of the conservation corps that was developed by the government during the Great Depression and asks the reader to imagine what a program like that would look like today.[176] She then explains:

> Making this happen on any level is citizen engagement that requires each of us to tune in and figure out our own angle - for you, that may mean being involved in a local organization, showing up to speak with a state representative, or calling your congressperson. Part of the point is this: farming does not happen in a vacuum, but requires a deep engagement with the workings of the world.[177]

In this quote Fleming achieves a few things. One, she moves from encouraging the reader to imagine a potential future to asking the reader to consider how they can make it happen. This occurs at the end of the guidebook. Having presumably read the earlier

[176] Ibid. 21.

[177] Ibid. 22.

chapters, the reader is now given the chance to imagine themselves using what they have learned as part of the solution to the problems laid out by Fleming. It inspires people to be active in the work of the movement, not just the work of farming. Additionally, it continues the work of ameliorating anxiety around making the changes that support the movement by presenting multiple options for engagement. Fleming isn't prescribing one single procedure that one must take in order to be engaged. By encouraging the reader to "tune in and figure out your own angle," she encourages agency and allows flexibility for people to see themselves involved in many potential ways.

Overall, putting together the *Greenhorns' Beginner Guide to Getting into Farming* is one important way that the organization addresses one of their key purposes: to prepare new farmers for entry into farming. They do this by sharing important knowledge in an accessible way. Although somewhat ideological from an agenda setting perspective in that they focus on information about sustainable agriculture, this element of their materials fits into the history of agricultural education that they are a part of. Whether from a social movement organization, private business or state entity, making agricultural knowledge accessible has always been part of the agrarian imperative.

Still, there are some important differences between old agrarian education and what the Greenhorns endeavor to achieve. The Greenhorns' desire for sustainable agriculture and their audience of people who have never farmed differ from historical farmer educators who were typically interested in teaching conventional farming to people already raised or enculturated as farmers. Historically the goal was to cultivate better farming practices for people already working the land. In contrast, the Greenhorns

strive to reach people who may be interested in farming but grew up far from the fields their ancestors might have once worked. They tailor information to this audience of novices primarily by what they chose to include. There is very little specific technical information about farming. Instead, the guidebook focuses on helping people learn how to find technical information should they want it and explains how to approach entering farming including the basics of finding jobs and apprenticeships, how to cultivate the necessary demeanor for farming, and what possibilities exist for types of farming and accessing land. Additionally, the Greenhorns do significantly more and different emotional work in their materials. Where old agrarian teaching included materials meant to inspire pride in rural living, the Greenhorns work to ease anxiety and inspire people to enter farming and act in accordance with the goals of the sustainable agriculture movement. Nonetheless, the need to find a way to reach people with information about farming and reinforce emotions that promote agrarian goals remains a crucial element of farmer education and thus a foundational aspect of the social movement learning this organization needs to facilitate.

The majority of the Greenhorns' materials, however, go beyond basic knowledge and confidence building. Skill building happens within the context of a social movement organization that is actively working to develop a cognitive praxis aligned with new agrarian values in its members and interlocutors. The Greenhorns knowledge training is also a type of social learning designed to help members embrace the purpose of the social movement, namely farming for sustainability in a new agrarian system. In the remainder of the chapter, using Cox' notion of usable traditions I will analyze the ideological

premises emerging from the Greenhorns' educational materials. Then I discuss how they encourage readers to put this ideology in practice by constituting the activist farmer as the prototypical subject of new agrarianism. Having sketched out how they make farming appear as a viable possibility, I will assess how the Greenhorns train people to be agrarian activists at the same time.

Developing a Worldview

Much of the Greenhorns' educational materials are framed by explicitly value-oriented material that help support the ideological work started in their recruitment. Where their recruitment sketches the big picture goals of the organization and what the Greenhorns hope to achieve, the ideology built into the Greenhorns' educational materials teaches their audience the central world view of the movement alongside practical skills for farming. Analyzing how they do this allows a deeper examination of the Greenhorns' ideology, ultimately demonstrating what Eyerman and Jamison suggest happens in social movement learning: they both create and take up knowledge. As described in the introduction, new agrarianism uses old agrarian values as a usable tradition to develop a new agrarian ethic. In this section I will return to this concept to explain how the Greenhorns develop and teach this ethic. As a social movement organization on the vanguard of the sustainable agriculture movement, understanding how they indoctrinate new people can help explain how this ideology develops. Cox's theory of usable traditions is especially useful for understanding how social movement learning happens as ideas enter a movement and become embedded in the ethic required of those who follow it. In the Greenhorns' educational materials, it is possible to track

each of the three ways that Cox suggests usable traditions become integrated as warrants in a new ethic.

One could think of the three levels of usable tradition as a series of successive sieves. The first level, “extension of warrants of a central tradition to new areas,”[178] has the largest holes, in this case an idea from the central tradition passes through relatively unscathed in large pieces; it is simply used in a new way. The next level “the substitution of neglected or minority traditions as warrant”[179] has slightly smaller holes; the initial idea is more disturbed and less recognizable from the original idea. The final level, “a critical or dialectical use of the past in which argument 'dissociates' the foundational warrants themselves,”[180] is a very fine sieve in which very little of the original idea can pass through unscathed into the new ethic but still impacts the new ideas.[181] Cox goes on to further explain this final level as an “interpretation of a tradition in ways that fundamentally alter our understanding of the original principle or norm.”[182] In the Greenhorns’ educational materials, their guidebook in particular, we see traditional notions of US agrarianism taken up in each of these ways as the work to indoctrinate readers into their ideology. This agrarian ethic helps them reach their goal, not only to help new entrants into farming learn practical skills and knowledge but to help them

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[178] Cox, "Argument and usable traditions." 94.

[179] Ibid. 94.

[180] Ibid. 94.

[181] Ibid. 94.

[182] Ibid. 95.

develop a sense of self and an understanding of the meaning of their work within the social movement they are part of.

The first level is perhaps the most evident in the rhetoric of the Greenhorns' materials. For instance, the introduction of the guidebook grounds educational and career goals in old agrarian ideals when they set up an imagined exigence that might lead someone to enter farming. Having been produced during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, the introduction recognizes that "the coronavirus has also wrought havoc on our food system and our faith in it - if we had any" and suggests that:

> Many of you reading this book may be recently released from your employment as food workers, or have found it psychologically or financially untenable to live in the high-rent cities on the verge of another recession. We've hurried this book out into the world to offer for your consideration a career path even closer to the source: life, food, farming, and land.[183]

Prefacing the book with this statement relies on the old agrarian values the Greenhorns are rooted in; that farming is not only a career but "the source." Here the warrants of the central tradition are simply applied to a new context. No longer is the goal to keep rural people farming, but to entice urbanites to begin farming and experience the better life that would result.

Likewise, Flemings' discussion of land access echoes the agrarian ideals built into historical farmer education efforts. She elaborates upon the difficulty of accessing land and reiterates that farming is hard work but suggests that "by ignoring the market signals that tell us to opt for tech and real estate, we choose to leverage our bodies, minds, and

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[183] Fleming, *Greenhorns Beginner's Guide to Getting Into Farming*, 3.

passion for the sake of the earth, our communities, and our ability to feed ourselves."[184] This establishes the importance of the choice to farm as "a whole set of creative, local-scale solutions to massive problems - from loss of biodiversity and climate change to food security and rural brain drain."[185] These statements directly call back to the goals of old agrarian farmer education that emphasize the virtues of difficult labor and rural life but they apply the ethic to modern contexts, most notably the environmental concerns that are central to the ideology. Here, the warrants from the central tradition are used to support an argument for farming as a solution to environmental degradation. This application does not change the warrant at hand; it simply finds a more relevant argument to apply it to.

The second type of usable tradition takes up "minority or neglected" warrants from the existing ethic into the new ethic. This is illustrated by the Greenhorns' focus on the history of agrarianism in social movements and the priorities that arose from these movements as opposed to state and corporate versions of agrarianism we see in the history of agricultural education. For example, the focus on land access and farmer's rights in the guidebook draw from the long history of farmers organizing for their own interests. Fleming establishes small-scale sustainable farming as a solution to the exploitative and violent history and present of farming. She also insists that, although farmers play a central role in this work, everyone has a part to play in "changing the systems that put them [farmers] at the margins of land stewardship in this country." And,

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[184] Ibid. 8.

[185] Ibid. 8.

in Fleming's estimation, achieving this goal requires more than just buying organic produce.[186] Here Fleming uses less central but nonetheless important ideas stemming from movements like the Grange and the National Farmers Union to support the goals of their modern movement.

Finally, the Greenhorns participate in the critical use of past warrants in their discussion of race and colonialism in agrarianism. This section demonstrates how the Greenhorns use agrarian values in more transformative ways as they develop the new agrarian ethic that ultimately supports their work. In the final section of the guidebook, Fleming highlights reparations and food justice as part of the required change. She identifies restoring and repairing land, ecosystems, and nonhumans as being enmeshed with reparations for humans who have been historically oppressed:

> Healing the earth - fulfilling, righteous, and good in the deepest sense - should not happen without recognition of other victims of colonization and oppression. Reparations for black people, indigenous people, and People of Color, especially in the Americas, is central to all of our discussion of Land Access above. When we create private systems to feed privileged populations expensive food, our runoff poisons minority communities downstream. When we create a diversity of food justice and land justice and reparative justice, we create strong vegetation for us all to thrive on.[187]

She argues that "earth repair" alone is insufficient, identifying that conservation practices often reproduce the same problems of human injustice. Here Fleming critiques parts of the historical version of agrarianism, in which mostly white farmers were stewards of the land. This line of arguments may not rise to the level of "interpretation of a tradition in

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[186] Ibid. 21.

[187] Ibid. 22.

ways that fundamentally alter our understanding of the original principle or norm" (p. 95). Still, I would suggest that such a transformation does not happen within one text or even one social movement organization. When one considers new agrarianism as whole, however, we begin to see how many arguments such as these may come to alter our understanding of an idea when they combine. The fact that a "new" agrarianism exists suggests that enough of the old agrarianism has been rewritten to constitute this change. This is an important move for the Greenhorns because it is what allows them to continue to use agrarian ideals while building these justices into their ideology. It would not be possible for the Greenhorns to accept agrarian values if they did not rewrite agrarianism to include these modern parts of a new agrarian ethic.

Within the context of social movement learning, developing these arguments is a crucial part of helping people embrace the movement. Although none of this necessarily teaches people how to be farmers, it does teach them what the Greenhorns believe and how to make these arguments for themselves. Members of the movement need to understand this ideology in order to actualize the goals of the movement and this social movement organization. Additionally, recalling the basics of SMO theory according to Brulle "changes in social structures are brought about through a redefinition of what constitutes the common sense embodied in the everyday practices of society."[188] Reworking usable traditions into a new ethic begins the work of redefining common sense embodied in everyday practices, in this case the practices of farming. However, simply constructing the argument doesn't necessarily change actual everyday practices.

[188] Brulle. "Environmental discourse and social movement organizations," 61.

Essentially, in this work the Greenhorns build the theory for the movement. In the final portion of this section, I will assess how they encourage particular praxis based on this theory.

Encouraging Praxis; Constituting the Activist Farmer

The final piece built into the Greenhorns' educational materials is the constitution of a particular cognitive praxis or way of knowing that blends the practical education and ideology of the movement to foster a particular identity and worldview. Additionally, the Greenhorns encourage the development of a kind of material praxis. Much of the research about social movement learning rightly focuses on the linguistic elements of social movements, how they adapt and create knowledge to support their ideological mission. The Greenhorns demonstrate how that knowledge can encourage a particular way of engaging with the world that ultimately helps create the change a social movement wants to see.

The first part of this work is constitutive in nature. Throughout the guidebook as well as other materials, the Greenhorns constitute their audience as agrarians and potential farmers. The theory of constitutive rhetoric posits that discourse can constitute identities in audiences and relies not on the idea that this kind of rhetoric persuades, but that it creates common identification. Though the term "constitutive rhetoric" wasn't coined until the 1980's, it is a process that has been noted in rhetorical theory since the classics and was developed by authors like Kenneth Burke through his discussion of identification and Edwin Black's concept of the second persona. Maurice Charland

picked up these threads in his 1987 article “Constitutive Rhetoric: the Case of the Peuple Quebecois" in which he identifies a problem for rhetorical critics working to understand ideology: “attempts to elucidate ideological or identity-forming discourses as persuasive are trapped in a contradiction: persuasive discourse requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity and within an ideology.”[189] He forwards constitutive rhetoric as a theoretical approach to understanding how ideology is formed in an audience. Through his analysis of a Quebec secessionist movement, he identifies how the emergence of the term “Quebecois” and the discourse that surrounded it constituted what were once French-Canadians as a distinct people. Thus, rather than simply arguing for the independence of Canada’s largest province, the political movement constituted a people who had the right to argue for sovereignty. Charland suggests that through this construction of “ideological subjects,” constitutive rhetoric “defines inherent motives and interests that a rhetoric can appeal to.”[190] In other words, constitutive rhetoric creates new subject positions in an audience (p. 141). This approach to understanding movements is particularly useful for studying how groups like the Greenhorns operate because they work to create different types of subject positions so that their persuasive goals can gain purchase. This work is built into the educational goals of the Greenhorns, and it helps explain how cognitive praxis develops. The constitutive nature of the Greenhorns' work demonstrates where technical information and ideological background come together to

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[189] Charland, Maurice. "Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the Peuple Quebecois." *Quarterly journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 134.

[190] Ibid. 137.

foster a new identity in the audience and ultimately helps explain how they work to train activist farmers into a movement.

The Greenhorns' guidebook begins constituting the agrarian farmer activist even in the introduction of the guidebook by blending the practical aspects of farming with a discussion designed to help readers see themselves as potential members of the movement. Fleming asserts that farming requires learning, "sustained effort," preparation, and "an intense burst of concentrated entrepreneurship"[191] along with capital which she acknowledges is difficult to amass. She calls to new agrarian ideology by emphasizing the living systems farmers work with, farm policy and the "macro-economy defined by the settler, colonial, monoculture-dominated supply chain of doom"[192] After laying out some technical skills someone might need to learn as well as sketching part of the ideology of the movement- associating the current dominant system with doom, Fleming prompts the reader to see themselves not just as an observer of this system but as a potential agent in its change:

> In the wake of all this corona cancellation, perhaps you've had more philosophical time to contemplate this moment in history, the needs and workings of your own body, and how you might want to prepare yourself for the unknowable future.[193]

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[191] Fleming, *Greenhorn's Beginner's Guide to Getting Into Farming*, 3.

[192] Ibid. 3.

[193] Ibid. 3.

They propose farming not just as a job, but as an embodied way of living and working into the future. By encouraging the reader to consider how they will need to act and by using a particularly intimate form of address, this section begins to show the reader how they might step into the subject position of a new agrarian farmer activist.

Fleming continues to constitute the identity of a new agrarian farmer at the same time that she does another crucial part of movement building, defining the other against whom the movement works. One section of the guidebook, "How did we get Here? Big Box Everything," focuses on laying out the problems the organization works against. Fleming dedicates three paragraphs to developing her description of problems she sees as most serious in agriculture such as "corporatization and financialization of our food system," and "practices of industrial agriculture," "agribusiness-driven farm policy." She concludes that "Giant acreage monocultures supplying a global market chain are not resilient, and they are not just."[194] These topics outline the systems and practices that the movement is against which implies particular people who are not welcome in the movement, particularly big business farmers who own huge tracts of land, and the politicians, bankers and industry leaders who support and reinforce this way of farming. Once these systems and the people therein are explicated, it becomes easier to constitute the identity of the activist farmer.

Fleming explicitly states that the guidebook "can be used to fashion a life and livelihood in the fields" but that "we also want to help you become aware of how global

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[194] Ibid. 7.

markets, rural decline, climate, conservation, and resource extraction are deeply linked to the land."[195] This guidebook is not only designed to teach practical skills, Fleming wants to encourage people to establish a livelihood in agriculture but on the terms of the movement that encourages local markets, rural vitality, and environmental care. Although Fleming does not use the word "agrarian" here, the things she wants the reader to be aware of are in line with the new agrarian ethic the Greenhorns develop throughout their materials. In listing these values and practices as an important way to be part of the movement, she works to create a subject position of a new agrarian farmer rather than only a farmer. The implication is that fashioning a life in the fields alone does not make one a part of the movement. To be a true new agrarian, one must attend to these other issues and in doing so step into a new subject position. The chapter ends with further exploration of the organization's stances about food system reformation and adaptation and welcomes aspiring farmers "who are newly interested in the production of food and the management of ecological landscapes that support health, habitat, clean water and a living planet."[196] It is a statement which reinforces the position and suggests that only those who seek to enter the kind of agriculture the Greenhorns support are welcome.

Encouraging Praxis: Engaging with Nonhumans

As Eyerman and Jamison suggest, social movements have the potential to create not only knowledge but the identities, worldview, and social practices that create change.

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[195] Ibid. 7.

[196] Ibid. 7.

How the Greenhorns work to constitute the identity associated with agrarianism illustrates some of the discursive means by which this happens, especially identity formation. However, constitutive theories of rhetoric have received some critique, such as Richard Rogers' argument that constitutive theories of rhetoric are insufficient because they fail to evaluate how the material world affects human action. Rogers suggests, among other shifts, that rhetoricians focus on "ways of listening to nondominant voices and nonhuman agents and their inclusion in the production of meaning, policy, and material conditions."[197] Likewise, Nathaniel Rivers argues that "environmentalism specifically needs a more intense rhetoric—one engaged not simply in human discourse, but in the nonhuman, in the object."[198] In addition to identity formation, the Greenhorns pursue social practices in line with agrarian thinking that dictate how people engage with and understand the nonhuman world. In studying this final element of the Greenhorns' work to create farmer activists, we can see how agrarianism becomes useful not only through ideology and identity development, but also in answering critiques that call us to find ways of engaging with the nonhuman, demonstrating another Coxian change of old agrarian warrants into an ecologically grounded new agrarianism.

One gap that becomes clear in this research is a dearth of vocabulary to help scholars address this tension. How do we use symbols to discuss the nonsymbolic? The

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[197] Richard A Rogers, "Overcoming the objectification of nature in constitutive theories: Toward a transhuman, materialist theory of communication." *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 62, no. 3 (1998), 268.

[198] Nathaniel A. Rivers" Deep ambivalence and wild objects: Toward a strange environmental rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 5 (2015), 422.

need to more fully appreciate materiality in environmental rhetoric has been established, but the avenues of exploration by which scholars might do so are limited. For example, Nathan Stormer and Bridie McGreavy ask: "if a particular rhetoric is not a function of human aptitude for symbolicity but of systemic vulnerabilities between all sorts of entities, then by what methods would we study the rise and fall of different rhetorics relative to the materialities they depend on?"[199]A few scholars have approached this type of question and considered how it might be possible to effectively research communicative relationships between humans and nonhumans. Michael Salvador and Tracylee Clarke suggest the word *weyekin,* a term they learned from the Nez Perce people as a way of listening to nonhuman animals,[200] and Tema Milstein argues that humans should think of themselves as witnesses, not spectators, to better appreciate animal communication.[201] Likewise, Natasha Seegert shows that coyotes who have begun to patrol in downtown Chicago disrupt the idea that only human animals are rhetorical.[202] Elizabeth Dickenson offers "ecocultural conversations" as a way of challenging the

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[199] Nathan Stormer, and Bridie McGreavy. "Thinking ecologically about rhetoric's ontology: Capacity, vulnerability, and resilience." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 50, no. 1 (2017): 20.

[200] Michael Salvador, and Tracylee Clarke. "The Weyekin principle: Toward an embodied critical rhetoric." *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2011): 243-260.

[201] Tema Milstein. "The performer metaphor: "mother nature never gives us the same show twice"." *Environmental Communication* 10, no. 2 (2016): 227-248.

[202] Natasha Seegert. "Play of sniffication: Coyotes sing in the margins." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 47, no. 2 (2014): 158-178.

nature/culture divide to communicate with nature.[203] Additionally, scholars have produced a number of case studies that seek to understand human-nature communication.[204]

Many of these case studies about the relationship between environmental rhetoric and materialism have focused on how rhetorical scholars can listen to and incorporate rhetoric of nonhuman actors in the environment into their studies. A relatively unexplored but equally important approach to this work is studying how humans make sense of their shared vulnerability with the nonhuman. One exception is Nathan Cryer's call for "the ambivalent embrace of anthropocentrism and human control over nonhuman lives and objects, both of which are inevitable responses to modern ecological crises."[205] Cryer works to balance the desire to move to altogether posthuman research with the reality that humans will always be involved. He offers his approach in an effort to understand how humans can responsibly engage with the nonhuman. His important study centers food production as one of the primary ways that humans interact with nonhumans. The Greenhorns use new agrarian ideology to articulate a variety of relationships between symbolic understandings and material priorities of farming to make

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[203] Elizabeth Dickinson. "Ecocultural conversations: Bridging the human-nature divide through connective communication practices." *Southern Communication Journal* 81, no. 1 (2016): 32-48.

[204] Emily Plec, ed. *Perspectives on human-animal communication: Internatural communication*. Vol. 12. (Routledge, 2013).

[205] Daniel A Cryer. "Withdrawal without Retreat: Responsible Conservation in a Doomed Age." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 5 (2018): 460.

sense of their material commitments. In this analysis, the focus remains on human discourse but does what Stormer and McGreavy propose by considering rhetoric that arises out of a mutual systemic material vulnerability. The Greenhorns do this in their educational materials and elsewhere by encouraging praxis that attends to these shared vulnerabilities.

The exigence of shared vulnerabilities is deeply embedded in the Greenhorns' educational materials, even in pieces that seem primarily practical. For example, it is worth revisiting part of a quote from the practical knowledge section: "The point is not to learn everything there is to know, but to start thinking like someone whose decisions are based on the needs and capacities of the land around them - that is the job of the ecological farmer."[206] On its face this section was about learning the basics of farming, but this quote highlights that the Greenhorns seek to develop both a worldview and praxis as they teach. They encourage a particular kind of thinking that leads to actions in line with what the land needs. The new agrarian values built into this statement help the Greenhorns articulate a way that human farmers should engage with their nonhuman counterparts. Likewise, later in the guidebook Fleming builds the same approach into another practical tip: "Creating a viable farm business is yet another aspect of the complex ecosystem of taking care of the land - without it, you won't be able to provide what the land wants and needs."[207] For the Greenhorns, creating a viable business is not

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[206] Fleming, *Greenhorn's Beginner's Guide to Getting Into Farming*, 6.

[207] Ibid. 17.

something to be done for personal gain; it is embedded in appreciating and attending to the needs of the land. Farmers are well acquainted with mutual vulnerability. If their land community struggles, they struggle too and this deep history of togetherness between farmers and the land has been fertile ground for developing all types of connections.

Chapter conclusions

The *Greenhorns' Beginner's Guide to Getting into Farming* presents itself as an informational manual for people considering entering farming as a career, and indeed it does include much valuable information for someone with little to no practical knowledge of farming. However, it does much more than this in terms of training people to be farmers and activists in the sustainable agriculture movement. By including practical skills, guiding the development of an agrarian worldview and encouraging a particular praxis, the Greenhorns create the conditions to cultivate in people a particular way of engaging with farming, each other and the nonhumans around them.

Exploring how the Greenhorns do this rhetorical work offers insight into social movement learning by providing an in-depth case study of how one social movement organization seeks to spread information, cultivate attitudes and identities, and develop a new cognitive praxis. It also shows that the division between old and new social movements is indeed not as clean cut as some scholars make it out to be. Granted, the Greenhorns' goals and methods of education are quite different from "old" social movements; however, this organization's use of old agrarian values as an ethic demonstrates that old and new social movements are indeed tangled, and it demonstrates another way that "new" agrarianism functions as an outgrowth of "old" agrarianism.

Additionally, this research answers important questions in rhetorical theory about how to include nonhumans in rhetorical study by positing new agrarianism as a way that people integrate nonhuman needs into their praxis and rhetoric.

Chapter Four: Movement Maintenance and Sustainability

So far, this dissertation has explored various aspects of how the Greenhorns, as a social movement organization, work rhetorically from recruitment to education. In this final chapter I will discuss how this organization maintains itself and the movement it belongs to. Essentially, I ask: how do the Greenhorns make their organization and the movement for sustainable agriculture sustainable? I begin by surveying prior scholarship that has considered the problem of movement maintenance. Building on those efforts, I show how resource mobilization and network theory can explain some elements in the Greenhorns' work. However, I also demonstrate that communication functions as its own resource. Specifically, I argue that the concept of rhetorical ecologies is particularly useful for understanding communication as a necessary resource integral to maintenance in social movements that can ultimately serve to make social movements truly sustainable.

The chapter begins with an exploration of how social movement maintenance has operated in past agrarian social movements with attention to the academic discussion of old vs. new social movements. I then examine the Greenhorns' resource mobilization, networks, and rhetorical ecology, paying particular attention to the forms of pastoral affective exchange that contribute to their movement maintenance. In this analysis I make two main contributions. I contribute to resource mobilization theory, the ongoing academic discourse about rhetorical ecologies and offer a useful novel approach to assessing how social movements persist.

Historical Context of Agrarian Movement Maintenance and Collapse

Just as recruitment and education in agrarian movements have shifted, so too has the maintenance of agrarian social movement organizations and the agrarian project as a whole. One key difference lies in the structure and purpose of the social movement organizations connected to agrarianism. Organizations working towards agrarian values in the past were often highly structured hierarchical organizations involved directly in political action. According to Eyerman and Jamison, "movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were organizers and institution builders."[208] These movements centered on social movement organizations such as political parties, associations, and trade unions that focused on political change and action where "the state was both a means towards actualizing the new visions, an instrument through which to assert power and an end-in-itself."[209] Thus, these older movement organizations were maintained insofar as they achieved political goals and maintained membership, the same is true for old agrarian movement organizations.

Historically, farmer labor parties, such as the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party (the antecedent of the current Democratic-Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota), were major forces of strategic agrarian organizing. Arising out of a coalition of socialists, agrarians, and trade unionists in the early twentieth century, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party

[208] Eyerman and Jamison. "*Social movements: A cognitive approach*." 151.

[209] Ibid. 151.

appeared as a third party option in the 1918 general election in Minnesota.[210] During this first general election, the party's gubernatorial candidate carried 30% of the state vote but came in second, above the Democratic candidate but behind the Republican candidate in 40 counties. Although the Republicans won the election, the relative success of a new radical third party was surprising. As the party evolved, it became a self-supporting institution, which was still supported by a coalition of organizations and political dealings but capable of funding and running its own affairs.[211] By 1922 the party was officially established as a discrete entity, along with county committees across the state.[212] During a 1922 special election for an empty senate seat, the Farmer-Labor candidate won by a large margin, establishing one of the first big wins for radical third-party politics in Minnesota. In 1930, the Farmer-Labor candidate won the gubernatorial seat but state politics as a whole were still quite contentious, and the party was by no means in control of Minnesota politics.[213] Despite their relative success, the party ultimately collapsed under waning membership, especially in the more urban parts of the state. By 1938, the party was in decline in part because of changing national politics along with "crippling factionalism," "disarray among farmer-labor leadership," and "a rightward drift in public

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[210] Richard M Valley. *Radicalism in the states: The Minnesota farmer-labor party and the American political economy*. University of Chicago Press, 1989. 28-29.

[211] Ibid. 33.

[212] Ibid. 39.

[213] Ibid. 53-54.

opinion."[214] Ultimately the Farmer-Labor party merged with the Democratic party in Minnesota in 1944.[215]

This short history of the rise and fall of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota demonstrates Eyerman and Jamison's claim that old social movements were often built around political action and state involvement. The ultimate disappearance of this party suggests that this model is difficult to maintain without continued electoral success. Ultimately, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party was focused on goals that were directly tied to electoral politics, the ability to control taxes, economic systems, and government benefits for farmers. This made maintaining the larger agrarian, labor, and socialist movements of the era difficult. Even with sufficient membership and some level of political success, the organization was not able to sustain itself due to a narrow focus that failed to appeal to broad interests.

Alternatively, nonpartisan organizations less directly involved in politics such as the Grange movement which the Greenhorns cite as an inspiration and could be understood as an organizational/ideological ancestor, also struggled to stay relevant and maintain the agrarian movement they supported. In fact, the Grange movement's insistence that non-political action was the most important avenue to secure agrarian values came as a detriment. According to Bourne, "one reason for the inability of the Grange to continue its initial success was the greater willingness of other farm organizations to align themselves with powerful political allies and to engage in party

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[214] Ibid. 139.

[215] Ibid. 156.

politics to obtain preferential treatment."[216] She further argues that "most early Grange endeavors failed because of inexperience, mismanagement, lack of connection to political powers, or an inability to provide local farmers with what they needed most."[217] Ultimately, "people simply stopped paying their dues." [218] The collapse of the Grange movement clarifies two points. First, old social movements were indeed powered by political engagement. Refusal on the part of the Grange to engage politically was a detriment to them in a time when social change demanded political action. A step further, however, their failure to partake in politics was not the only element that led to their dissolution. When their rigid membership structure that relied on dues fell apart, so too did their work as an organization. Ultimately, the Grange movement was not able to muster the necessary resources to continue and their messages ceased to be relevant. A study of modern agrarian organizing requires attention to how social movement organizations acquire resources without relying on rigid party or membership structures and how they keep their messages relevant.

Lessons have since been learned and new social movements such as the Greenhorns operate quite differently. Although some observers view new social movements as attempting to gain inclusion into established politics, Eyerman and Jamison contend that contemporary social movements "represent challenges to the established routines of 'doing politics.' New social movements offer the possibility of

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[216] Bourne, *In essentials, unity,* 30.

[217] Ibid. 45.

[218] Ibid. 53.

new projects, new ways of viewing the world and of organizing social life, which is something more than inclusion."[219] The concept of a movement's purpose being to reorganize social life is perhaps the most notable difference between old agrarian movements and new ones. Old agrarian movements, even those that were progressive in their economic or political goals were in many ways still socially conservative. Their goals were to maintain the existing social order in the image of Thomas Jefferson's vision of an agrarian society where farmers were the majority and most politically powerful group. As urbanization progressed and politics evolved, however, conserving this vision became untenable and thus these organizations were not able to maintain their work. Hence, as new agrarian movements take up the mantle, they are working in the opposite direction. Instead of trying to maintain old agrarian ways, the Greenhorns seek to discover new ones as they borrow from the past to invent a future. Eyerman and Jamison conclude that "the forms of consciousness that are articulated in social movements provide something crucial in the constitution of modern societies: public spaces for thinking new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas, in short constructing new intellectual 'projects.'"[220] Previous chapters have already discussed how the Greenhorns work to activate new actors and generate new ideas–new agrarianism being their new intellectual project. But the question remains, how can an organization maintain and sustain this new intellectual and social project? In what ways can they avoid the fate of their rhetorical and organizational antecedents, if they can at all?

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[219] Eyerman and Jamison. "*Social movements: A cognitive approach*." 149.

[220] Ibid. 161

Contemporary Theories of Movement Maintenance

To pursue these questions, I turn to two contemporary theories of movement maintenance–resource mobilization and social movement networks–and I consider both their insights and their limitations when tested through the case of the Greenhorns. I then suggest rhetorical ecologies as a complementary theory for understanding communication as a crucial element of social movement maintenance. I argue that in combination, these approaches are useful for understanding movement maintenance, because they offer a holistic view of how a movement functions. Resource mobilization provides a framework for evaluating what material and social resources are available to an organization and network theory directs attention to the people engaged with the work. Rhetorical ecologies is a way to assess communication as its own type of resource. Together these perspectives provide a view of an organization's capacity to work towards sustainability.

Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization theory is one useful approach which focuses on how social movements gather, maintain, and organize the resources necessary to function. Essentially, "resource mobilization scholars sought to understand how rational and often marginalized social actors mobilized effectively to pursue their desired social change goals."[221] Resource mobilization theory developed over decades of sociological research

[221] Bob Edwards and Patrick F. Gillham. "Resource mobilization theory." *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements* (2013). 1

and although a full review of this literature is outside the scope of this dissertation, Craig Jenkins efficiently summarizes the central aspects of resource mobilization as follows:

> analysts argued that: (a) movement actions are rational, adaptive responses to the costs and rewards of different lines of action; (b) the basic goals of movements are defined by conflicts of interest built into institutionalized power relations; (c) the grievances generated by such conflicts are sufficiently ubiquitous that the formation and mobilization of movements depend on changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action; (d) centralized, formally structured movement organizations are more typical of modern social movements and more effective at mobilizing resources and mounting sustained challenges than decentralized, informal movement structures; and (e) the success of movements is largely determined by strategic factors and the political processes in which they become enmeshed.[222] (528)

Although there is considerable debate among resources mobilization scholars about how accurately the theory describes social movements and in which context it ought to be used as a framework for describing them, it is useful for explaining how SMOs maintain their movement. Resource Mobilization theory allows for an analysis of how social movement organizations gather and use resources in pursuit of their goals and facilitates a focused assessment of one particular organization such as the Greenhorns. Additionally, resource mobilization is particularly useful for assessing the material entanglements of social movements and in doing so balances an understanding of discursive strategy with organizational strategy.

While aspects of resource mobilization theory are useful for the present analysis, some key tensions within the theory merit discussion here. Steven Buechler contends that among other issues, resource mobilization theory overemphasizes material resources and,

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[222] Craig J. Jenkins. "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 528.

in extreme cases, completely dismisses ideology in assessments of how social movements function. He then argues that analysts privilege highly structured organizations over loosely organized ones and that overall, the theory tends to ignore larger scale analysis such as analysis of a whole movement and smaller scale analysis such as analysis of individuals and leaders.[223] Additionally, resource mobilization scholars rarely consider communication as a resource of its own. Yet communication is a fundamental and inevitable part of any social organization. Rhetorical communication is also, as Ronald Walter Greene points out, a material practice that operates as a form of labor. As Greene explains, rhetorical agency is not limited to capacity for political communication. He suggests that it functions as a form of "immaterial labor" and argues that:

> From this perspective, rhetorical agency can be remodeled as communicative labor, a form of life-affirming constitutive power that embodies creativity and cooperation. As such, it extends beyond commodity production per se, to include communication's role in building social networks of all kinds…[224]

Given this reframing of rhetorical agency, communication can be understood as a specific resource that social movements use to reproduce themselves. In this context, rhetoric is not simply the capacity of an organization to invent, produce and disseminate persuasive messages. Instead, it is both constitutive in its capacity for invention but also rematerialized as a form of labor that is essential to the creation, maintenance and

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[223] Steven M. Buechler. "Beyond resource mobilization? Emerging trends in social movement theory." The Sociological Quarterly 34, no. 2 (1993): 222-24.

[224] Greene, Ronald Walter. "Rhetoric and Capitalism: Rhetorical Agency as Communicative Labor." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 37, no. 3 (2004): 201.

ultimately social reproduction of a social movement. Such communicative labor is not taken seriously by existing resource mobilization theory.

Despite resource mobilization theory's many insights, such oversights are problematic, especially when attempting to understand the discursive elements of a social movement in the context of their material entanglements. Ideology and its function in an organization such as the Greenhorns has already been considered in previous chapters. Yet the analysis cannot stop there. I contend that understanding how an organization works in conjunction with other actors is an important part of understanding how the movement they are a part of is maintained. Communication includes not only ideology but also the labor of communication: who speaks to whom, in what contexts, and to what effect? Thus, approaching social movements as networks is a useful balancing approach to understanding an organization and how it interacts with other social movement actors. As my study of the Greenhorns makes evident, communicative labor is a resource that helps social movement networks develop.

Social Movement Networks

Network theory helps us assess the first part of the previous question. In answering who speaks to whom, network theory's focus on relationality outlines the framework within which communication circulates. Many scholars agree that social movement organizations function as parts of larger social movement networks, and some argue that it should in fact be part of the definition of a "social movement." For example, Alberto Melucci posits that movement alone is an inadequate term for social movements

and explains: "I prefer to speak of movement networks or movement areas as the network of groups and individuals sharing a conflictual culture and a collective identity." [225] Mario Diani defines social movements as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities."[226] Not only are networks important for understanding how social movements function as a whole, Clare Saunders suggests that "networks are important because they allow movements to be sustained during periods of latency" and "make organizations difficult to repress, increase their recruitment bases, and encourage innovation and adaptability."[227] The focus on relationality and connections between people and organizations lays the groundwork for attention to communication and sustainability.

A number of researchers have found networks to be a useful framework for understanding food and environmental movements in particular. Charles Levkoe suggests in his assessment of Canadian alternative food initiatives that "contemporary structures of social mobilization require novel strategies that benefit substantially from the support of

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[225] Alberto Melucci. "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements." *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (1985): 799.

[226] Mario Diani. "The concept of social movement." *The sociological review* 40, no. 1 (1992): 1.

[227] Clare, Saunders. *Environmental networks and social movement theory*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 7.

social movement organizations."[228] He emphasizes that networks are an important part of this work. Likewise, in her analysis of environmental action in the UK, Saunders intentionally chooses the term "environmental network" instead of "environmental movement" because the term network allows the inclusion of groups that might otherwise be defined out of the idea of social movement because they are too embedded in politics, lobbying, or less direct action. She suggests that "the concept of 'social movement' does not comfortably sit with the broad range of environmental organizations commonly thought to be part of the environmental movement."[229] Network theory pushes studies about environmental movement making outside of the rigid boundaries of social movement organizations and their capacity to muster resources. It instead encourages flexibility in understanding who contributes to overall movement maintenance.

Resource mobilization helps explain what a social movement organization gathers or has access to in order to maintain their work and understanding communication as a resource is central to a complete assessment of how an organization functions. However, even with the inclusion of communication as an essential resource for social movements, the theory paints a static image of an organization and movement. Resource mobilization theory is a useful analytic tool but does not capture the complexity of the relationships required in building and maintaining a movement. Network theory, on the other hand, offers a more flexible framework for understanding who is involved and how they are

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[228] Charles Z. Levkoe. "Strategies for forging and sustaining social movement networks: A case study of provincial food networking organizations in Canada." *Geoforum* 58 (2015): 175.

[229] Saunders. *Environmental networks and social movement theory, 3*.

connected. It allows us to consider what patterns of connections emerge. Combining the detailed analysis of available resources made possible by resource mobilization theory with the flexible descriptive frame of network theory makes it possible to assess how an organization maintains itself with more rigor.

According to Mario Diani, networks contain three basic elements: nodes, boundaries and ties.[230] He explains that nodes are individuals and groups in a social movement and a boundary is essentially a set of criteria established by the analyst that help determine if an actor is included in a network. Ties represent links between nodes and in the context of sociological research where this framework is most often used, ties are understood as direct linkages between people or indirect linkages based on shared activities. Diani explains that in direct linkages actors are tied by interpersonal relationships, sharing information, or sharing similar values.[231] Indirect linkages, on the other hand, do not require direct interpersonal relationships but "may be reasonably inferred from the joint participation of two actors in the same set of events or activities."[232] Sociologists seem primarily interested in mapping these connections to understand how individuals operate within networks but are not typically engaged with examining how the networks themselves develop.

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[230] Mario Diani. "Network Analysis." In *Methods of Social Movement Research*, edited by Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg, 175–202. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 175-178.

[231] Ibid. 178.

[232] Ibid. 178.

Resource mobilization theory and the concept of social movements as networks certainly hold insights for the present study, but they also fall short. Resource mobilization theory allows for a more in depth look into how social movement organizations maintain themselves, how they muster the resources necessary to support their goals. However, they seem to carry a somewhat limited imagination about what counts as a resource, thus obscuring the role of social relations and communication as resources in their own right. Conceiving of social movements as networks leads to a more complete analysis of how an organization fits into a complex movement of various actors. However, without investigating more closely how such connections are built and maintained communicatively, we are left with a limited explanation about how networks are formed, how they endure, and what they do. Hence, in my analysis, I pay particular attention to the way communication enables the Greenhorns to maintain their work and strive toward sustainability.

The Greenhorns' Resource Mobilization Network

The Greenhorns describe themselves both as a "network for peer-to-peer learning"[233] and as a "network-creating" organization.[234] In this section I will analyze how this network is sustained as the Greenhorns muster the necessary resources to exist as a social movement. Not only do these resources maintain the Greenhorns' network, but

[233] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac For the Year 2013,* 3.

[234] "About Greenhorns." *Greenhorns*. Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

they are also an important part of their rhetorical ecology which I will explicate further in the final section. Here, I begin by focusing on modes of resource access and resource types that are set out by Bob Edwards and Patrick Gillham in their summary of the aspects of resource mobilization. Drawing from resource mobilization theory, Edwards and Gillham suggest that there are four modes of accessing resources for movement maintenance: patronage, self-production, aggregation, and co-optation/appropriation. Additionally, there are five types of resources: moral, cultural, human, material, and social/organizational. In this analysis I will detail how communication itself emerges as a resource in its own right that merits attention in assessments of social movement resource mobilization.[235]

Perhaps the most obvious resource needed by a social movement organization are material resources, "what economists would call financial and physical capital."[236] These resources form the base of operations for a movement organization. Although other resources such as human, cultural, and moral resources discussed below are important, a social movement organization simply cannot function without access to funds, space, and objects necessary for their continuation. Perhaps the most important material resource for the Greenhorns is their physical capital–the land on which their headquarters is situated and the structures where they engage in movement activities. According to the

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[235] Bob Edwards, and Patrick F. Gillham. "Resource mobilization theory." in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* Edited by David Snow (2013). 1-6.

[236] Ibid. 4.

organization's website, "the campus is a network of farms, land, and restored building sites spread along the Pennamaquan River and Leighton Point in the coastal town of Pembroke, Maine."[237] The campus includes a restored Grange Hall that houses their agrarian library, media space, and other materials in addition to an artist-in-residency house. Other locations such as Smithereen farm are not directly controlled by the Greenhorns but work with the organization. This is an example of co-optation in which "social movements often utilize relationships they have with existing organizations and groups to access resources previously produced or aggregated by those other organizations."[238]

This is the first example of how networks become important in the Greenhorns' resource mobilization and thus for the sustainability of the movement they belong to. They use the word network to describe their access to physical space and they have built this network by forming close interpersonal relationships within their community to establish lasting connections. Additionally, their physical space is critical for sustaining the rest of their network. The Greenhorns explain that:

> From our rural campus, we host visitors and collaborators from around the world, edit and produce radio pieces and video media, we publish the New Farmer's Almanac, host artists and teachers, we coordinate conferences and exhibits, panel discussions and online curriculum.[239]

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[237] "About Greenhorns." *Greenhorns*. Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

[238] Edwards and Gillham, "Resource mobilization theory," 2-3

[239] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

This space is a central node where they build their movement and produce the materials that develop their organizational capacity. It facilitates their work and allows them to remain connected to the larger agrarian movement.

In addition to land and buildings, the Greenhorns also have a variety of ways to collect funds because donations are a primary source of funding. They do not receive donations directly, however. The Greenhorns access direct donations via a combination of patronage, which "refers to the provision of resources to an SMO by an individual or organization"[240] and aggregation in which "monetary or human resources are aggregated by soliciting donations from broadly dispersed individuals in order to fund group activities."[241] Donations are aggregated in the sense that they are directly solicited from those interested in their work. However, as an SMO, the Greenhorns are not set up as an official nonprofit that can accept donations. Hence, they rely on patronage from other organizations established as nonprofits to process and disburse these funds. If one wants to make an online donation to the Greenhorns, it is processed by Agrarian Trust, a sister organization. They also have direct financial ties to Maine Organic Farmers and Growers' Association (MOFGA) who is their fiscal sponsor. A sponsor is necessary for the Greenhorns to collect funds because they function like a nonprofit but do not have legal status as such so must allow another organization to manage their funds.[242]

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[240] Edwards and Gillham "Resource mobilization theory." 3.

[241] Ibid. 2.

[242] "Donate." Greenhorns. Accessed July 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/donate/.

These funding sources represent another important element of the network. They are deeply entwined with both of the organizations that help them manage their funds. MOFGA has a farm stand on their campus and the Greenhorns share staff with Agrarian Trust. Perhaps most notably, the Greenhorns' founder and director Severine von Tscharner Fleming also serves as the board president of Agrarian Trust. Additionally, the funders who donate to the work represent the next level of the network. Although these individuals may not have close interpersonal or locational ties to the Greenhorns' work in Maine, they remain part of the network. In this case, the Greenhorns leverage their network as a way to access the resources they need to survive.

These aggregated funds made possible by patrons are an important source of funding for the Greenhorns but not their only means of raising money. Another resource is money earned from sales of their materials such as posters, apparel, books, and media. These are self-produced resources in which social movement actors create "resources themselves through the agency of existing organizations, activists, and participants."[243] These are different from aggregated resources because they come from directly within the organization and are part of the close network of activists who support the organization as opposed to from a dispersed potential donor base. While these resources result in material wealth which is obviously necessary for the continued function of an SMO, they are derived from the next type of resource mobilized by a social movement organization, namely human resources.

[243] Edwards and Gillham "Resource mobilization theory." 2.

Human resources include "labor, experience, skills, expertise, and leadership. Individuals typically have control over the use of their labor and other human resources and make them accessible to social movements or SMOs through participation.[244]" These resources are primarily attained via self production, that is, the members of the organization train, recruit, and involve others to build up human resources. Leaders and employees who manage the organization are part of the human resources that keep it afloat. The art, music, books, and products sold by the Greenhorns are the product of their human resources, which include staff, artists, authors and thinkers who collaborate with them to offer up their knowledge, ability, and labor, sometimes on a volunteer basis and sometimes for a fee to raise money for the organization. In addition to those who help produce sellable products, any labor that goes into maintaining grounds, buildings, running workshops etc. fall into this category. To a lesser extent these resources are sometimes gained via co-optation, when movement actors co-opt resources developed by other organizations,[245] by partnering with other organizations and inviting guests to participate in activities. Again, we see how resources exist within a network that make gathering and distributing these resources possible.

Perhaps more importantly, however, it is in the activation of such human resources that communication's importance as a resource becomes most obvious. Because their funding sources are relatively limited and controlled by other organizations, human resources give the Greenhorns a way to continue their work

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[244] Ibid. 4.

[245] Ibid. 2.

without a large funding apparatus. When communication is understood as a form of labor, it becomes part of the labor that human resources can offer to an organization but is also imperative for building and maintaining the other human resources listed above. The Greenhorns' work is explicitly communicative; hence, understanding that communication and the rhetoric therein as a resource in its own right expands upon the analytic potential of resource mobilization.

Cultural and, I would add, communicative resources also help establish human resources and thus help gain material resources such as land, donations, and merchandise sales. Deploying cultural resources is perhaps where the Greenhorns excel most, allowing them to broaden their network beyond those who are interpersonally connected to them. "Cultural resources are artifacts and cultural products such as conceptual tools and specialized knowledge that have become widely, though not necessarily universally, known."[246] These include knowledge of organizing social movement events, using media sources, and includes things produced by human resources such as the almanacs, merchandise and events. Essentially, human resources include people available to produce SMO resources, whereas cultural resources are harnessed by the people via aggregation when an "SMO converts resources held by dispersed individuals into collective resources that can be allocated by movement actors."[247] These resources then materialize as products and discourse. Although cultural resources are a useful category

[246] Ibid. 3.

[247] Ibid. 2.

of resource when considering resource mobilization, I contend that communication and the deployment of communication media are a distinct resource that should be evaluated separately.

Cultural resources are particularly well suited for evaluation from a communication perspective, especially in the case of an organization such as the Greenhorns who focus so intentionally on developing and deploying communicative media. They are also aware that these media are important for building their network and maintaining their movement:

> Our own cultural and creative work reaches a national audience via social media, books, online resources, e-newsletters, and the conference circuit and sale of propaganda materials. Our goal is to warm up the entryway and welcome many more people into the agri-sphere. Let's get connected![248]

Here they share outright that they consider at least some of their materials to be propaganda, intentionally created media that help tie people to the organization and to their movement. They seek to "welcome many more people" to the agrarian movement they support and understand the value of their communicative and persuasive materials in doing so. The continued success of the Greenhorns' biennial almanacs reveals that their cultural resources are primarily communicative and have developed from the organization's capacity to create such materials. Six editions of the *New Farmer's Almanac* have been published. The number of contributors to these almanacs has increased significantly with each edition. The first one contained contributions from 47 authors and the last one contained 138. Across the 5 volumes, there have been 431

[248] About Greenhorns.". Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

contributors from the US as well as some from abroad. These were analyzed in more depth in previous chapters but the sheer number of people who contribute to these volumes indicates that the Greenhorns are adept at using their media savvy to expand their network.

Next, moral resources are often incorporated into cultural resources. "Moral resources include legitimacy, integrity, solidarity support, sympathetic support, and celebrity."[249] For the Greenhorns, some moral resources are accumulated as a result of their networks. By aligning themselves with local organizations they gain a certain level of legitimacy, and they connect to celebrity in instances when they include big names in agriculture and agrarianism in their work, such as interviewing Wendell Berry. However, moral resources represent another instance where understanding communication as a resource can offer new insights into social movement maintenance. Legitimacy and integrity in particular are not always something bestowed upon an organization by a legitimate outsider. These perceptions are often communicatively invented and are part of the rhetorical choices made by an organization.

Communication, media, and rhetoric are important resources in their own right that are mobilized by the Greenhorns SMO. Taking the Greenhorns' almanacs as an example, one could argue that the media themselves are a cultural resource: contributors needed the skills of invention to create their submissions, the organization needed to understand how to edit, format, and publish the almanacs and the almanacs themselves

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[249] Edwards and Gillham "Resource mobilization theory." 3.

become cultural resources that help spread skills and resources to their audience. However, these are also a direct result of human resources; without access to the communicative labor necessary to write, edit and publish these volumes they would not exist. The organization's communicative arsenal also functions as a moral resource which provides them with legitimacy and helps them recruit big names to endorse their work. The Greenhorns could not exist without these communicative resources, yet they are not listed among the traditional resources visible to resource mobilization theory.

I suggest that discursive, rhetorical resources ought to be considered as a type of resource produced by and useful to social movement organizations when assessing resource mobilization. The resources that are typically assessed in extant theories focus almost exclusively on the structural elements of social movements. These include either material things that sustain the organization or skills and knowledge that help the organization operate. However, for an organization whose mission is to a great extent rhetorical–not only to organize actions and change policies but to change minds and ways of being–rhetorical resources are paramount. The Greenhorns must be able to do more than produce media, put on events that create rhetorical exposure, generate contacts, encourage interaction, and maintain their campus. Inherent in their goals is the need to persuade and educate. This is not only true for the Greenhorns but for many organizations and I argue that social movement scholars should consider the rhetorical resources available to or generated by a social movement in addition to the more commonly researched resources already discussed.

Having established that communication and rhetoric, more specifically, play an integral role as a resource used by social movement organizations such as the Greenhorns, the question becomes, how do they function to help maintain a social movement? The concept of rhetorical ecology can help address this question. Rhetorical ecology describes the affective spread and function of rhetoric within a broad, but relatively contained, context and studying it asks scholars to attend to the broader relationships in which rhetoric is entwined and which it maintains. The Greenhorns use their material and communicative resources to create and disseminate discourses across their networks and foster a rhetorical ecology that supports their work. This rhetorical ecology is just as important to their organization's capacity for longevity as the material and organizational resources that helped create it. In the following section, I consider how the Greenhorns' rhetoric and in particular, their version of agrarianism, spreads within the rhetorical ecology the Greenhorns are a part of and how it contributes to the maintenance of the movement by creating affective resources.

The Greenhorns' Rhetorical Ecology

The notion of rhetorical ecology posits that rhetoric functions like an ecological system in which discourses ebb and flow. The concept originated from the ecological turn in rhetorical studies that Ehrenfled summarized as "a turn toward systemic understandings of rhetorical circulation and material interrelation."[250] The rhetorical

[250] Dan Ehrenfeld. ""Sharing a World with Others": Rhetoric's Ecological Turn and the Transformation of the Networked Public Sphere." Rhetoric Society Quarterly 50, no. 5 (2020): 305.

ecological perspective has morphed into a somewhat broad concept, encompassing complexity in composition studies, rhetorical approaches to ecological questions, rhetorical new materialisms, as well as an approach to studying public discourse. For the purposes of illuminating how the Greenhorns build a persistent and sustainable movement, I am interested in rhetorical ecology as a way to explore the system of communicative exchanges, material entanglements and affective flows required to maintain an organization and support a sustainable social movement. In this section, I analyze parts of the Greenhorns' rhetorical ecology with particular attention to the ways that history figures in it, how the organization leverages a pastoral affect to connect their ecology to people who are not part of their immediate network, and their broader interactions beyond their campus to understand how they steward a rhetorical ecology.

Originating in composition studies,[251] the concept was first introduced to public discourse scholars by Edbauer as an adaptation to the concept of rhetorical situations. According to Jenny Edbauer, "[a]n ecological, or affective, rhetorical model is one that reads rhetoric both as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process."[252] Edbauer developed the concept of rhetorical ecology as a way to move beyond more limited notions of the rhetorical situation, which limit study to a fixed

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[251] Richard M Coe. "Eco-logic for the Composition Classroom." *College Composition and Communication* 26, no. 3 (1975): 232-237. And Marilyn M Cooper. "The ecology of writing." *College English* 48, no. 4 (1986): 364-375.

[252]Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 13.

context that encompass one discrete time, place, and audience. She contends that "though rhetorical situation models are undeniably helpful for thinking of rhetoric's contextual character, they fall somewhat short when accounting for the amalgamations and transformations - the spread - of a given rhetoric within its wider ecology."[253] This approach values not only one time, enactment, and place. It provides a wider analytic framework, allowing scholars to assess rhetorical patterns that coalesce into organizations and movements beyond isolated interactions.

As Caroline Druschke explains, "[t]his notion of rhetoric as emerging not just from a static location, but from entanglement in temporal, historical, and lived fluxes, has become an increasingly dominant paradigm in growing areas of rhetorical studies."[254] Essentially, this approach asks us to pay attention to how rhetoric moves, changes and connects; it describes how ties are built within a network. Other studies that have taken up the concept of rhetorical ecology have explored kairos in digital rhetorical ecologies,[255] context in political rhetoric,[256]circulation of civic rhetorics,[257] and digital

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[253] Ibid. 20.

[254] Caroline Gottschalk Druschke. "A trophic future for rhetorical ecologies." *Enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing, and culture* 28, no. 1 (2019). Para 9.

[255] Joe Edward Hatfield. "The Queer Kairotic: Digital Transgender Suicide Memories and Ecological Rhetorical Agency." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2019): 25-48.

[256] Nick Turnbull. "Political rhetoric and its relationship to context: a new theory of the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical and the political." *Critical Discourse Studies* 14, no. 2 (2017): 115-131.

[257] Jonathan L Bradshaw. "Slow circulation: The ethics of speed and rhetorical persistence." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 5 (2018): 479-498.

damage and stories[258] among others. What unifies such work is attention to more than text and immediate context that rhetoricians have historically attended to. Treating rhetoric as an ecology rather than a fixed event provides for clearer analysis of an entire system of communication such as an organization or social movement.

Edbauer also focuses on the affective aspects of rhetoric and claims that "rhetorical ecologies are coordinating processes, moving across the same social field and within shared structures of feeling"[259] Citing Nedra Reynolds, Edbauer explains that "'sites' are made up of affective encounters, experiences, and moods that cohere around material spaces."[260] Edbauer ultimately suggests that "rhetorical situation is better conceptualized as a mixture of processes and encounters; it should become a verb, rather than a fixed noun or situs."[261] There are a few key words here that help us conceptualize the affective aspect of rhetorical ecologies: encounters and moods. As opposed to a focus on text alone, affect, as it is used here, encourages us to consider how people come upon and conceive of and react to things, each other, places, texts, and ideas. Affect is about movement, processes and feeling within a larger whole. Arguably, affect allows for persuasion to occur. As Thomas Rickert points out, "[a]ffect, or persuadability, already inheres, both materially and meaningfully, and is therefore prior to rhetoric. It is the

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[258] Dustin W. Edwards. "Digital rhetoric on a damaged planet: Storying digital damage as inventive response to the Anthropocene." *Rhetoric Review* 39, no. 1 (2020): 59-72.
[259] Edbauer "Unframing Models of Public Distribution" 20.

[260] Ibid. 11.

[261] Ibid. 13.

condition of possibility for rhetoric's emergence."[262] This definition explains how affect in rhetorical ecology might work as a coordinating process. It forms the relational structure upon which persuasion works. The attention to the "coordinating processes" of rhetorical ecologies make it a particularly useful concept for understanding social movement/organization maintenance because it allows us to track how communicative labor and feeling coordinate a social movement organization and ultimately an entire social movement. For example, in the previous chapter I established how the Greenhorns constitute the agrarian farmer rhetorically. Using the lens of rhetorical ecology to understand the affective nature of the flows of communication within which these subjects exist can offer clues about what keeps them engaged.

There are certain advantages to approaching the Greenhorns SMO as a rhetorical ecology if we are to consider the movement's sustainability. Doing so allows us to consider what affective modalities and communicative inputs and outputs enable their organizational reproduction. Rhetorical ecology complements resource mobilization and network theory because it allows us to do exactly what these other perspectives are missing. Where networks and resource mobilization theory paint a static picture of a movement, describing a snapshot of the people and resources they have access to, rhetorical ecology attunes to the ways that rhetoric moves and fuses the human and non-human world. Rhetorical ecology implores us to attend specifically to the communicative flows that exist within a broader rhetorical context understood here as a rhetorical

[262] Thomas Rickert. *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013. 159.

ecology. In combining this approach with resource mobilization and network theory, it becomes possible to account for the various aspects of creating and maintaining a social movement organization.

History in the Greenhorns' Rhetorical Ecology

The Greenhorns are not operating from a blank slate where they can populate the rhetorical ecology of their choosing. Instead, like a farmer working with their local ecology to grow food, the Greenhorns enter a rhetorical ecology where they can harness what already exists and grow something new. In her conception of rhetorical ecologies, Edbauer seeks to "add the dimensions of history and movement (back) into our visions/versions of rhetoric's public situations."[263] Although similar to Cox' usable tradition, history in rhetorical ecology functions somewhat differently. For Cox, history serves to produce warrants that can be adapted into new ethics. This perspective explains how people build arguments that can serve a transformative social movement; it operationalizes choices a rhetor might make in developing an argument. In a rhetorical ecology, history is something that is part of the ecology already. It might impact what knowledge is accessible to someone devising new ethics, but its reach is broader, and its results are different. It includes more than the history that a movement takes up; it includes the history of the movement/organization itself and the history a movement chooses to not highlight, such as the less tasteful parts of agrarian history. Edbauer's call that we attend to history into our "visions/versions of public situations" refers to much

[263] Edbauer "Unframing Models of Public Distribution" 9.

more than the warrants that might be transferred to a new ethic and result in different outcomes. Where Cox is interested in argumentation, Edbauer is interested in affective circulations including how history might impact them. The Greenhorns' rootedness in agrarian history is an important aspect of their rhetorical ecology

As previously discussed, agrarianism is a discursive and material field with deep roots that has circulated in the US since the country's inception. It has a history that the Greenhorns step into and use to their advantage by tying their work to what came before. The decision to recognize this ecology and adapt it to suit their interests helps them establish fertile ground for their work. I would argue that this historical awareness is not only an important element of rhetorical ecology but also crucial for maintaining this particular social formation. As discussed in previous chapters, the Greenhorns transform perceptions of history in their rhetoric and use it to establish a new environmental ethic. Yet the presence of such an ethic in their rhetorical ecology also renders tradition into an affective element for the work they intend to do. People can feel connected not only to those who do this work now but to those who came before.

The Greenhorns recognize the role of history in agrarian thinking and feeling, conceptualize agrarian history as a source of strength, and present it as a starting point for imagining the future. Each of these positions encourages a different mood. In the *2013 New Farmer's Almanac,* Fleming acknowledges how integral history is to agrarian thinking: "It seems a long standing agrarian ache, to harken back to purer time, a time with less exploitation, less confinement, less extraction and servitude."[264] Use of the

[264] Fleming, *The new farmer's almanac For the year 2013,* 7.

word "ache" suggests a painful desire for things perceived as lost. Whether this idealized version of the past is real or imagined, it is an important part of the Greenhorns' rhetorical ecology because it informs their work as modern agrarians. The feeling they describe, the "ache" for the past, primes a reader to want to do what they can to soothe that ache. Fleming claims that "[t]he bravery required of new farmers today requires history as context."[265] The Greenhorns frequently reference history as a source of strength and learning and by acknowledging this part of their rhetorical ecology and applying it to their discourse, they help people to develop the bravery that is required for them to remain committed, even in difficult times, to alleviating the ache of desire for the past. In addition to thinking about the past and acting in the present, the Greenhorns harness history in their ecology to imagine a future: "In this volume, new agrarians explore alternative histories and possibilities. Tapping into a deeper more complex past– and operating in expectation of an imaginal, but plausible, feasible, deep and tempting future"[266] The Greenhorns connect their conception of history to feeling, an ache for the past, bravery in the present, and desire for the future. This treatment of history forms an affective scaffolding, a structure of feeling upon which to build their new agrarian arguments.

Agrarian Affect through Encounter and Pastoralism

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[265] Fleming, *The new farmer's almanac For the year 2013*, 3.

[266] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac 2015*, 1.

The palpable presence of history is part of the existing rhetorical ecology that the Greenhorns must manage and can use in their efforts to sustain their movement. However, the organization also has the capacity to steward a particular ecology to work within. One way they do this is developing an agrarian affect via encounter. The Greenhorns rely on agrarianism being more than an idea. As discussed in chapter two, they deploy agrarianism as a praxis and experience, but experience alone does not necessarily foster persistence in the movement or organization. Experiences are not meaningful in and of themselves; they require the work of rhetoric. Hence, the Greenhorns need to cultivate the affective orientations emerging from the experiences of individuals interacting with each other, ideas, things, and landscapes. Such affective rhetorical work allows agrarianism to take root in individuals, it renews the rhetorical ecology, and it makes way for sustainable agricultural persuasion.

Edbauer notes that encounters are key affective conditions in a rhetorical ecology. Hence, the first aspect of the Greenhorns' affective rhetorical work that I will explore relates to the encounters they create. Descriptions of affectual encounters sprout all over the Greenhorns' materials. On their campus, they clearly strive to foster encounters that encourage people to become rooted in the place and the movement. The description of the agrarian library maintained by the Greenhorns illustrates their intentionality with respect to affective management:

> The Agrarian Library contains approximately 9,000 cataloged volumes. The project aims to enable historical exploration and contemporary cultural production. As such, the library safeguards agricultural materials and provides tools for land-based and self-directed learning. As a system for circulating

> materials—books, ideas, conversations, and projects—the library provides the opportunity for unconventional learning paths.[267]

They describe their library not only as a location that serves as a repository for agrarian materials but as a space that enables cultural production and land-based self-directed learning within a "system of circulation." The library is not passive; its mission is to encourage production and learning paths that highlight not only books and ideas, but conversation, projects, and unconventional learning encounters. Notably, the library is not a circulating library, thus for someone to access this particular part of the Greenhorn's agrarian rhetorical ecology they would need to be present and connected to the organization physically. Similarly, their residency program invites "creative thought partners" to stay on campus from one week to one month. They explain that "[t]his is a place for practicing out loud the land use changes that we wish to see in the world." and insist that "[i]t is for anyone who wants to come to this beautiful place and yield to the directives it presents — through the sentience that arises from relationally [sic] and in being accountable to this living system of Cobscook Bay."[268] Even without using the word agrarian, the Greenhorns aptly describe what it means to embody agrarianism in this description. In directing residents to yield to the place and recognize sentience in relationship with living systems, they build the rhetorical ecology of agrarianism as a

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[267] "The Greenhorns Agrarian Library." Greenhorns. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/agrarian-library/.

[268] "Residency." Greenhorns. Accessed August 2, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/residency/.

relationship of care for the place in which one resides. Even more, they foster a sense of spirituality.

Someone who enters the closed system of the library becomes part of the ecology of the place, encountering not only the rhetorical ecology of agrarianism but also the environmental ecology of Downeast Maine and the social ecology of the Greenhorns. Likewise, a visiting artist, farmer, or researcher is encouraged to yield to the place and strive for relationality with the land. The directive to yield and the use of the word sentience are particularly striking. Yielding to a place, an ecology, a landscape, something beyond oneself, is reminiscent of yielding to a spiritual power. The assertion that an encounter with a palace will create sentience enhances this spiritual connection between the visitor and the place because it implies that the "living systems" are capable of knowing and feeling and that a visitor will become part of this sentience in the process of yielding to it and accepting accountability to it, almost like someone may accept accountability before a god. These encounters foster a spiritual relationship to farming and connection to the land.

Establishing the affective dimensions of such encounters and connections makes it possible to attach agrarian principles and arguments to the feeling of connectedness. It is harder to give up and move on when someone has developed a relationship and spiritual connection to the ecological and cultural systems on the campus. The Greenhorns are not an organization of membership; there are no membership cards or donation minimums required to gain entry. It is an organization of relationality; it requires engagement and presence which are fostered by encounters that take place in

structures such as the library and with projects like the residency program. Affective relationships such as those fostered by the Greenhorns' rhetorical ecology are crucial for the maintenance of the organization because they encourage continued presence and engagement, thus increasing the Greenhorns' access to resources that can be gained from that individual. Perhaps more importantly, these encounters bolster the movement as a whole as people become embedded in an agrarian frame of mind that predisposes them to act upon the goals of the movement.

In addition to the affective encounters that are encouraged on the campus, pastoral descriptions and images of the place that a distant reader experiences while perusing the website expand the rhetorical ecology beyond the immediate place. Citing Abrahms, Stephen Browne explains pastoralism as "any work which represents a withdrawal from ordinary life to a place apart, close to the elemental rhythms of nature, where a person achieves a new perspective on life in the complex social world."[269] He notes that rhetorically, "pastoral promotes a certain kind of attitude, a posture which exhibits the ideals of a Golden Age for present purposes."[270] Furthermore, pastoral rhetoric "entails a reconfiguration of time and space, which takes the present and relocates author, text, and audience in a different realm."[271] Alina Haliliuc and Pamela Connors note another aspect of pastoralism: "[n]ature, in the pastoral form, is not threatening or sublime, but beautiful

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[269] Stephen H. Browne. "The pastoral voice in John Dickinson's first letter from a farmer in Pennsylvania." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76, no. 1 (1990): 46-47.

[270] Ibid. 47.

[271] Ibid. 47.

and fecund, figured as healing and responsive to the needs of humans."[272] Note the affective aspects of pastoralism here; it creates an attitude and is not threatening but healing and safe. Pastoralism helps the Greenhorns involve people who are more distant from them in their rhetorical ecology by encouraging the types of affect that pastoralism encourages.[273]

The Greenhorns use pastoral descriptions of their campus to create a kind of pseudo-encounter for those who read them. They allow readers who may be unable or unwilling to visit in person a way to feel what it might be like to have these experiences. They describe their campus as an idyllic place "in the charming coastal town of Pembroke, in Downeasternmost Maine,"[274] which includes various buildings and "The Smithereen 'home farm,' 160 acres of diverse organic agriculture and forest overlooking Cobscook Bay. Here we host most of our workshops in the gentle shade of the summer kitchen."[275] They describe it as "a rural headquarters for living, working, farming, cooking, exploring nature together" and declare that "we are blessed to live, farm, fish, harvest and roam in the stupendous natural beauty of the Cobscook Bay bio-region."[276]

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[272] Alina Haliliuc, and Pamela Conners. "Embodied Trauma and Pastoral Relief: The Rhetoric of the Flight 93 National Memorial." *Western Journal of Communication* (2023): 5.

[273] See also: Greene, Ronald Walter. "Lessons from the YMCA: The material rhetoric of criticism, rhetorical interpretation, and pastoral power." In *Communication Matters*, pp. 219-230. Routledge, 2013.

[274] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

[275] "About Greenhorns.". Accessed June 6, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/about.

[276] Ibid.

Tied to the basic description of the farm which demonstrates characteristics of new agrarian farming such as diversity and organic agriculture is a pastoral feeling, "the gentile shade of the warm summer kitchen" evokes a feeling of calm contentedness that conjures ease and community while living, working, and exploring in the presence of agricultural and natural beauty supports the soul. By transmitting these feelings to far away readers, the Greenhorns create a kind of proxy encounter that, as Browne would say, relocates the reader to a different realm.

These distant encounters are also fostered through the images that the Greenhorns include on their website. The descriptions of the agrarian library are coupled with warm photos depicting the space. The warmth is registered in one image that shows gentle sun streaming through the windows as someone peruses a book; another shows a vase with dried plants among stacks of books and another shows the whole space–an old building with bookshelves along walls, antique looking tables and chairs, a kiosk with pamphlets, posters and banners on the walls, and doors in the back that lead to other rooms. The library appears to be cluttered but usable, a comfortable place to learn and explore. The images paint an inviting scene; the space is warm, unobtrusive and full of treasures to discover. Browne suggests that "[b]y abandoning the confusion of the near world, pastoral presents a world of clearer, simpler meanings."[277] I would argue that images such as these serve this purpose. There are no computers in the spaces pictured, the age of the building and furniture and the simplicity of the library present a slowed down, simpler space that a viewer can imagine themselves in.

[277] Browne, "The pastoral voice in John Dickinson's first letter from a farmer," 47.

Pastoral sensibilities appear in other images on the website as well, especially those containing people at work. Pictures of people connecting with each other and their environment appear interspersed with landscapes and scenery on various pages of the website–a closeup of hand cutting fresh vegetables in an outdoor kitchen, people paddling on what appears to be a river, a group of people in a cluttered workshop working on something together, another group around an outdoor picnic table in discussion about what appear to be foraged plants, three individuals walking through a meadow harvesting something, a man about to butcher a pig. These images of people doing the work of agrarianism showcases it in a way that words cannot access. It shows that people who attend events and work at the campus are living what they preach, and it demonstrates how this close network operates. It also allows people who are more removed spatially from this work to get a feel for what it means to live an agrarian life. Haliliuc and Connors suggest that pastoral nature is beautiful, healing and responsive to the needs of humans. In these images we see these aspects of pastoral rhetoric. The pastoralism of the agrarian rhetorical ecology leaves room for interpretation conceptually but also allows for the encounters that Edbauer describes as affective. If someone cannot physically encounter the campus, these images function as a stand-in, a visual pastoral encounter that has the potential to stick in someone's mind and help them become more interested and involved in the work.

What distinguishes the Greenhorn's pastoralism from the type of pastoralism that Brown discusses is the aspect of time. Pastoral rhetoric is often one of looking back to the "Golden Age" as Browne calls it. In fact, Browne argues that pastoralism is inherently

conservative because of this orientation to time.[278] I would argue however that in this case the Greenhorns are pastoral in a progressive way. There are some elements of deep pessimism in the rhetorical ecology that the Greenhorns inhabit, a fact that they recognize. They acknowledge that "farming is as hard, even harder, as it ever was" and they admit that "we inhabit the age of apocalypse."[279]However, they see their project as working to avoid "fall[ing] down the dark hole of negativism."[280] They are looking for a "path to collective survival"[281] and even ask readers of the 2017 almanac to "[j]oin us as we cherish the present tense as a form of rebellion." [282] In these descriptions and images, the Greenhorns create a present tense version of pastoralism that invites individuals to share in their rhetorical ecology as a corrective against pessimism. Browne suggests that "[i]n pastoral, the will to return [to a better time] does not entail escape; rather pastoral encourages constructive activity." This task is of great importance for the Greenhorns' and the sustainable agricultural movement. Hopelessness is a strong affect, and they must fight against it for their rhetoric to find purchase and their movement to flourish.

Broadening the Rhetorical Ecology of New Agrarianism

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[278] Browne, "The pastoral voice in John Dickinson's first letter from a farmer" 52.

[279] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac 2019,* 15.

[280] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac 2015,* 14.

[281] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac Vol. V,* 11.

[282] Fleming, *The New Farmer's Almanac 2017,* 17.

In addition to images and descriptions on their website, the Greenhorns produce other work meant to maintain the organization and include those who may not be present on the campus into the organization's rhetorical ecology. And as I demonstrated above, the rhetorical cultivation of appropriate affect is an important dimension of the Greenhorns' efforts to maintain the ideological parameters of their rhetorical ecology. They do some of their most intentional rhetorical work in their effort to grow the number of participants in this ecology through co-sponsored events and media productions where they are explicitly interested in encouraging people to take up agrarian lifeways. In doing so, they highlight that there can be a wide variety of ways that one might enact agrarianism and thus remain involved in the movement. For example, they co-sponsored an arts collaboration exhibited in California, on the other side of the country from the Greenhorns campus, called EARTHLIFE. They described it as:

> a moving and morphing exhibition about tuning into the distributed volition of living systems. This show collects together artists and researchers whose work addresses the themes, insights, and practices of restoration ecology and regenerative agriculture. Land art, land tradition, land use innovations, land healing actions, legacies, and projections — these are the vocabularies we wish to explore together. The exhibition features films, social sculptures, archival documentations, and future-forward imaginings by six artists and collectives[283]

In this quote we can see two aspects of how the Greenhorns cultivate their new agrarian rhetorical ecology. First, it demonstrates how they spread new agrarian ideology and, second, it shows how they work to expand beyond their immediate networks. Although much of the Greenhorns' work takes up old agrarian values as well as new, the work they

[283] "Earthlife Art Exhibit." Greenhorns. Accessed July 20, 2023. https://greenhorns.org/earthlife-art-exhibit/.

do here is strikingly focused specifically on the new aspect of new agrarianism. In highlighting restoration and regeneration and the practices required to achieve them, the Greenhorns highlight the new agrarian priority of sustainable land use. On a deeper level, the purpose of the exhibition to "tune in" to the "volition of living systems" speaks directly to the praxis of engagement with nonhumans described in the previous chapter. These goals of the Greenhorns are not limited to their educational materials. They are part of the work they send out into the world in collaboration with others.

This description aptly shows the ways that the Greenhorns enter and foster a broader agrarian rhetorical ecology. They do not pretend to control the meaning of the ideas that they are exploring in this collaboration. Instead, their goal to "explore together" honors the fact that this is an ecology to join with, not concepts to command. By recognizing the ecological nature of the rhetoric they embrace, the Greenhorns create a flexible structure for their organization that can change as necessary in support of their goals. Unlike their more rigid organizational antecedents, the Greenhorns are able to adapt and their willingness to extend their work beyond the confines of their physical location is critical for maintaining the organization and their movement.

Chapter Conclusions

To maintain their organizational integrity and ultimately the new agrarian movement requires the Greenhorns to efficiently acquire and deploy necessary resources. They acquire the necessary material resources for their organization from a network of community partners, other organizations and individual donors. However, while material

resources such as land and funding are important, they alone do not assure the continued existence of the organization. Rather, their most important resource is communication which, combined with other resources, helps to establish and maintain a rhetorical ecology. When successful, this ecology provides the Greenhorns with a flexible structure where agrarianism operates through affective engagement with the organization and the movement.

Assessing the Greenhorns organization and movement's maintenance offers a few important insights to social movement scholarship. First, it establishes communication as a particular resource, which has been largely neglected by social movement scholars who focus more on material and broader social resources. The Greenhorns are not particularly well understood from the perspective of material or even social resources alone. Communication is an essential function of their organization, and it is integral to understanding how they sustain themselves and the movement for sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, my perspective contributes to communication and rhetorical studies by expanding the concept of rhetorical ecology as a useful framework for understanding the role of communication in maintaining social movements. Much research in rhetorical ecology has focused on the ecology of particular social formations but little has been published about how rhetorical ecology might function as part of a larger whole. By assessing rhetorical ecology and its affective rhetorical dimensions as an essential part of a social movement, this research illuminates further potential of the concept. Finally, it contributes to the growing body of research considering the role of new agrarian thought and the function it has in modern society by exploring its role in sustainable agricultural

organizing. Rhetorical ecology lets us consider how environmental sustainability is humanly sustained.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In their mission statement the Greenhorns claim that "[t]he work of repair is a collective one–Greenhorns occupy ourselves with storytelling, skill building, network-creating and animation of the young farmers movement." Their choice of the word "animate" is an interesting one. Animate as a verb means to "breathe life into, to endow with life, give life to or sustain in life; to quicken, vivify."[284] The central goal of this organization is to give life to and sustain the sustainable agricultural movement that they are part of. Ultimately, the Greenhorns' story is about relational sustainability. Storytelling helps them to recruit people to the organization and movement, skill building teaches people how to do the work and make the change the organization seeks, network building maintains the organization and the movement, and affective rhetoric sustains the rhetorical ecology of the new agrarian movement as a whole. These things animate the movement–giving it life and hopefully sustaining its life as long as the needs they address persist.

The Greenhorns rely on the story of US agrarianism to build the foundation of their organization and recruit people to the work. This is an important first step in animating their organization and movement. In chapter one, I explored their agrarian rhetoric and how they enter and shape agrarian discourse to recruit people and support a broader movement for sustainable agriculture. Ultimately, their uptake and re-shaping of key tropes and tenets of old agrarianism helps the Greenhorns fulfill important functions

[284] "animate, v.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/Entry/7778 (accessed July 09, 2023).

of social movement rhetoric as they work to recruit people into sustainable agriculture. However, the complex and violent racist history of agrarianism makes it a potentially damaging story to rely on and the dual audiences of farmers and nonfarmers involved in supporting new agrarian goals makes the Greenhorns' rhetoric difficult to pinpoint, ultimately leaving some people out of more effective recruitment.

This exploration of agrarianism in a modern social movement organization contributes to a variety of academic discussions. First it helps explore how new agrarianism functions in a movement and adds to a growing body of work exploring the discourse historically and contemporarily. Where most research about US agrarianism focuses on its appearance in discourse more broadly, little research exists about how it functions rhetorically in a movement setting. I offer a case study for how agrarianism creates conditions of possibility for movements while acknowledging the potential pitfalls therein. Additionally, this dissertation contributes to communication scholarship about food movements and activism by exploring the aspects of agrarian rhetoric that entices people into food production, an area of food communication research that has received less attention than food distribution and consumption. It also addresses questions of justice around food and agriculture by exploring the implications of relying on a discourse with such a brutal history. My conclusion that there is still constructive potential in agrarianism, as long as the role of Whiteness is reflexive, offers hope that movements such as the new agrarian movement and SMOs like the Greenhorns can succeed in ameliorating significant environmental issues without aggravating injustice.

Skill building is another element of the work that animates the movement; it gives people the capacity to do what needs doing in the movement. Chapter two explored how the Greenhorns approach education in their efforts to teach people new skills and perspectives. In this chapter I considered how agrarian and agricultural education happened historically and the new and rhetorical challenge of educating farmers with no prior farming experience into a sustainable agricultural movement. Using the concepts of social movement learning and usable traditions as a framework, this chapter showed that new farmer education works on three levels: practical skills, worldview building, and encouraging praxis by constructing an activist farmer and creating an ethic of rightful relations with nonhumans. Combined, these types of education are designed to cultivate an activist agrarian farmer as part of the wider sustainable agriculture movement.

My exploration of the Greenhorns' use of education engaged in various threads of academic discussion. It continued the discussion from chapter one about modern iterations of agrarian thought and offered an interesting case of a social movement taking up warrants from an older tradition for use in a new ethic. In this case, the Greenhorns take up old agrarian warrants that support new agrarian goals such as care for the environment and reparations. Likewise, the case study very aptly demonstrates how social movement learning functions in a modern social movement organization. It also intervenes in rhetorical scholarship about environmental and nonhuman rhetoric. Many environmental rhetoric scholars have questioned how rhetoricians might study rhetorical interactions between humans and nonhumans. The Greenhorns use new agrarianism as a way to articulate their relationship with and commitment to nonhumans; the ideology

mediates this relationship and gives us a vocabulary to describe human and nonhuman relations.

Finally, the Greenhorns work to animate their movement via network building which helps them maintain their organization and their movement. Chapter three discussed maintenance. How historical agrarian organizations maintained themselves or failed to do so and how the Greenhorns network and the resources that flow through the organization contribute to an agrarian rhetorical ecology. In this chapter I tracked their network and resources as a social movement and discussed the rhetorical ecology that they facilitate with attention to how that ecology helps maintain the organization and larger movement.

This analysis makes two important contributions to academic discussion. First, I establish communication as an important resource in its own right. Resource mobilization scholars focus almost exclusively on material resources that an organization can leverage. Although they give some consideration to social and media resources, they do not discuss communication as a particular resource that is required for an organization to function. Second, I contribute to conversations about rhetorical ecology, and I argue that the concept is particularly useful for understanding this type of social movement organization and how it becomes sustainable. The lens of rhetorical ecology offers a flexible frame for tracking how a discourse moves through an ecology and emphasizes the affective quality of social movement maintenance, offering one explanation for how environmental movements can be truly sustainable.

The Greenhorns are an intriguing organization whose approach to movement work offers a compelling case study. Ultimately, studying this type of organization is crucial for understanding how humanity might make the types of changes that are necessary to reverse the damage humans have done and work towards a healthier future for all living things. With this dissertation, I make three overall contributions. First, I offer a unique perspective into the history of agrarianism and how it functions in a modern social movement by showing that it is a powerful ideology that still circulates within farmer movements. Second, I offer an in-depth assessment of a social movement organization that offers a holistic view of their work. By combining a variety of approaches for studying social movements, I study the breadth of the Greenhorns' organizational capacity, their recruitment, activities and maintenance. Such a study offers a potential roadmap for other scholars studying similar concepts or organizations and insight for activists who might want to better understand potential approaches to their work. Finally, this dissertation intervenes in various schools of thought in environmental communication and rhetoric. Environmental degradation is one of our planet's most serious problems. Effective communication facilitates the interventions necessary to alleviate these problems and studying said communication can move us closer to the solutions we so desperately need.

Presently, the Greenhorns are still a vibrant active organization. At the time of writing this dissertation, they are about to publish the next edition of their almanac, they continue to offer workshops and events, and they have a slate of visiting agrarians for the 2023 year. For example, in their latest email update they indicated that they are hiring for

a part time grant writer and their farm season is going strong. The Greenhorns have been doing important work for the last ten years and I have no doubt they will continue to do so. Ultimately, they have worked hard to create a sustainable organization for a sustainable agricultural movement. All evidence suggests that they will continue doing the new agrarian work of paving the way for new entrants to agriculture for the foreseeable future. But even if they do not, the new agrarian ethic they have worked so hard to develop, spread, and instill in their interlocutors will surely transplant and take root in new rhetorical ecologies.

Further research into the Greenhorns, agrarianism and the rhetoric of social movements is warranted to track how the Greenhorns and organizations like them carry on their transformative work. First, research methods that were outside of the scope for this dissertation and beyond its material opportunities as a project conducted under the restrictions of the COVID pandemic could be applied to the Greenhorns to offer important insights to further what the research here has uncovered. Interviews with Greenhorns activists and members could answer questions about intention and effectiveness and offer a clearer picture of internal workings of the organization that are not open to the public. Likewise field research at the Greenhorns campus could offer insights into rhetoric of place/space and intervene in academic discussions about rhetorical field methods.

More broadly, continued research about new agrarianism is warranted. Questions still exist such as: Do other farmer organizations interact with and employ new agrarianism? If so, how are they different from or similar to the Greenhorns' work and

how do they contribute to larger movements? How do they navigate some of the rhetorical conundrums posed by agrarianism's history that the Greenhorns work so hard to navigate? What other ideological formations interact with agrarianism in sustainable agriculture and what rhetorical forces work against it? How do movements for sustainability reckon with racial and colonial violence? Research into these questions can offer scholars continued insights into themes covered here such as SMO rhetorical formation and maintenance, social movement learning, rhetorical new materialisms and ecologies, and food systems research and would surely uncover new and valuable insights as well.

Nina Pick, editor of the third volume of the *New Farmer's Almanac* offered a particularly moving description of the contributors to the almanac:

> It may be that farmers, and poets, and farmer poets, of which there are many represented in this volume, are doing the most important work of our era, in both the visible and unseen realms. By tending to the soil and the soul (and these are not separate), they hold an essential cultural and human archive, a depth of meaning and a mode of being that is essential to our society and is rapidly in danger of becoming lost.[285]

The new agrarian project is rarely so neatly summed up in one passage. New agrarianism is simultaneously environmental and cultural, spiritual and embodied. It offers important lessons for productive relations with each other and the earth that we ignore at our peril.

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[285] Pick, Nina, ed. 2017. *The New Farmer's Almanac 2017: Commons*. Vol. 3.: The Greenhorns. 5

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