

2016

An equitable alternative to conventional agriculture? Discourses of whiteness and color-blind racism in local foods systems

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**An equitable alternative to conventional agriculture?
Discourses of whiteness and color-blind racism in local foods
systems**

by

Ahna Kruzic

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Co-Majors: Sustainable Agriculture and Sociology

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2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background	1
The Problem	2
Purpose	3
Research Question	4
Theoretical Framework.....	4
Significance.....	5
Glossary of Terms.....	6
Overview	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Introduction.....	9
Discourse Analysis	9
Whiteness as Discursive Identity	12
Localism in Alternative Agriculture Movements	14
Whiteness and Color-Blind Racism in Alternative Agriculture.....	17
Manifestations of Whiteness in Local Foods Movement Spaces	19
Valorization of farmers.....	19
Framing of Food Consumption as Choice	21
White Desire to “Convert” People of Color	22
Looking Ahead	23
CHAPTER 3: DATA AND METHODOLOGY.....	25
Data Collection	25
Discourse Analysis	31
Validity and Reliability	35
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	37
Cares About But is Not Responsible for People of Colors’ Concerns	39
Privileging One’s Own Knowledge	43
Minimization of the Importance of Race.....	46
Culture as the Problem	49
Choice or Personal Responsibility.....	51
Contextualizing Demonstrated Whiteness	53
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	59
Recommendations for Future Research	63
Applied Significance	64
APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE INTRODOCTORY EMAIL.....	66
APPENDIX 2: VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT.....	67

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	69
APPENDIX 4: IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	72
References.....	73

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Craig Chase is a valued additional member of the Program of Study Committee for this thesis.

ABSTRACT

There has been an increasing volume of scholarship and activism that positions local foods systems as a more equitable alternative to the globalized agrifood system. One of the key assumptions that informs local foods activism and scholarship is that localism addresses the injustices associated with the placeless globalized industrial agrifood system. As a result, a discourse has emerged that assumes the local to be a site of social, economic, and environmental justice. Though many local food movement participants presume local food systems to be more economically, socially, and environmentally just than the conventional globalized agricultural system, narratives of whiteness and color-blind racism within the local foods movement permeate the movement's collective discourse.

This research examines movement discourses evoked by active, engaged participants across the local food systems movement, and how discourses evoked demonstrate hegemonic whiteness and color-blind racism. Further, examples of subversion, struggle, and rejection of whitened discourses are provided. Data analyzed in this paper includes utterances data from practitioners, researchers, farmers, advocates, activists, and more from in-depth semi-structured interviews. I argue that a critique of white privilege within our local foods movements and a disruption of "local means equitable" is necessary to build sustainable agrifood movements that dismantle injustices typically associated with the globalized agrifood system.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Alternative agriculture movements and their ideologies are situated by some scholar and activist proponents as a possible solution to social injustices associated with the globalized agrifood system (Guthman, 2008). In particular, alternative agriculture proponents have popularized localism as an alternative to the comparatively placeless globalized conventional industrial agrifood system. The local is sometimes implied by movement activists, scholars, and participants to be a more just, equitable, and ethical alternative to conventional agricultural systems (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Because global industrial agriculture is understood by movement scholars and activists to have succeeded in part through the creation of ‘placelessness’, many movement participants have embraced its opposite – localism – as a solution to problems associated with the placeless globalized industrial agrifood systems (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005).

Though local foods movements are oftentimes positioned as a solution to injustices associated with the global agrifood system, assumptions underpinning the supposition that localism as an alternative could produce globalism’s opposite as an outcome merit closer examination. By equating the local with justice and equity, we fail to acknowledge that the local is oftentimes a site of inequality, hegemonic domination, and violence (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Specifically, critical race theorists note that no understanding of any space is complete without recognition that the totality of political and social space in the United States is racialized (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Thus, racial justice and equity are not inherent to any space – including local foods systems spaces.

Though critical race theory notes that whiteness, or ideology and ways of being that maintain the hegemonic power of white supremacy, permeates all sociopolitical spaces, the frames underpinning the construction of normative whiteness differ from space to space, and can be analyzed in individuals' discursive communication (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). By identifying and analyzing frames of whiteness in a particular sociopolitical space, we can better understand how hegemonic power and powerlessness is maintained and disrupted. For example, if a particular utterance is out of place so much that it is not recognizable, it is not a discourse associated with that type of person in that discursive space. If, however, the evoked discourse is different in some ways from an accepted discourse frame but is still recognized as a discourse associated with that type of person in that discursive space, it can serve to disrupt a normative discourse (Gee, 2005) – in this case, the discourse of local foods movements. By identifying and analyzing examples of discursive whiteness, scholars and activists can better recognize, value, and duplicate the subversion of whiteness.

The Problem

Whiteness, or ideology and ways of being that maintain the hegemonic power of white supremacy, exists in the totality of American spaces, similarly permeating local foods movement spaces. Though many local foods movement activists and scholars have positioned local foods systems as the sustainable, fair, and just opposite of globalism, others have acknowledged that local foods systems are marked by whiteness (Guthman, 2008). As a result of the local foods movement's association with whiteness, its ability to catalyze sociopolitical transformation with the potential to address injustices typically associated with globalism is hampered (Allen, 2004).

Local foods movements are not only spaces typically characterized by white bodies, but are shaped by the normative practices of whiteness itself. The utilization of discourses of

whiteness constructs and reifies hegemonic whiteness, or the sociopolitical dominance and authority of whiteness – all while inhibiting the participation of those who do not or cannot perform hegemonic whiteness (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). As individuals utilize the normative discourse of a space, hegemonic power and powerlessness are maintained. Thus, hegemonic whiteness is maintained in local foods systems spaces, and a collective movement discourse characterized in part by the expectations of normative whiteness is espoused.

Given the historical and present-day white supremacy, the institutional mechanisms that maintain white normalcy, power, and privilege, within sociopolitical institutions in the United States, whiteness is a key condition that must be analyzed to understand and disrupt inequality (Omni & Winant, 2014). Naming and analyzing the frames that individuals draw upon which reify hegemonic power – in this case, whiteness as it maintains white supremacy – is critical to the disruption of inequality (Jenson, 2005). As a result, we must investigate discourses that imply localizing economic relationships addresses inequality.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how whiteness manifests through the discourse of local foods movement participants. I start with the assumption that local foods movement participants construct, participate in, and/or react to discursive whiteness regardless of personal racial or ethnic identity. Critical race theory assumes that the totality of space is racialized or defined by racial hierarchy (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Thus, disrupting inequality necessitates the naming and analyzing of frames utilized by individuals that maintain racialization – in this case, whiteness, or ideologies and ways of being which maintain white supremacy.

By analyzing the discourse of key local foods movement participants for discourses of whiteness, we can begin to understand the ways in which hegemonic whiteness is maintained. Thus, we do not accept the underlying assumptions espoused by some local foods movement proponents that localizing economic relationships addresses injustices and/or inequities typically associated with the globalized industrial agrifood system. Instead, this study names and identifies the frames utilized to maintain injustices and/or inequities in local foods movement spaces – in this case, whiteness – which is a necessary precursor to the deconstruction of such injustices and/or inequities.

Research Question

The research question I am exploring in this paper is “*How does whiteness operate through the discourse of local foods movement participants?*”

In exploring the above research question, I discuss what these discourses of whiteness suggest about local foods systems as an equitable alternative to the global agrifood system.

Theoretical Framework

I use two complementary theories to analyze the utterances, or data, collected from interviews with active, engaged key local foods systems participants. Gee’s (2005) theory and method of discourse analysis suggests that individuals’ usage of discourse is analyzed individually, but individuals are acting from within the sociopolitical context they exist, and thus, are also actively reifying (or subverting) their sociopolitical contexts. Individuals draw upon normative patterns of expectation, or frames that are socio-politically defined, in order to be recognized as a particular type of person in a particular space – in this case, a local foods system participant. If, in a given moment, a person has evoked any combination of language, interaction, beliefs, objects, and/or location together in a way that others recognize this individual as a

particular type of person engaged in a particular type of activity, then a person has successfully utilized a discourse (Gee, 2005).

Critical race theory notes that whiteness permeates all sociopolitical spaces. However, the frames underpinning the construction of normative whiteness differ from space to space, and can be analyzed in individuals' discursive communication (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). By investigating key local foods system participants' discourse for frames of whiteness, we can begin to understand how whiteness manifests as a part of what it means to be recognized as a key local foods movement participant.

Significance

This study contributes to the field of sociology by exploring how constructs of whiteness manifest through the discourse of local foods movement participants. Identifying and analyzing discursive frames that reify hegemonic power and powerlessness can provide future opportunities for the disruption of hegemonic power and powerlessness – in this case, white supremacy. Though some sociological inquiry notes racial inequity in local foods systems, scholars note that local foods systems are often positioned the equitable alternative to conventional agriculture. Because global industrial agriculture is understood by some alternative agriculture movement scholars and activists to have succeeded in part through the creation of intentional 'placelessness', many movement scholars and activists have embraced its opposite – localism – as a solution to problems of placeless globalized industrial agrifood systems without critically evaluating inequalities existing in local foods systems (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005).

By analyzing the discursive utterances of active, engaged, key local foods system participant for constructs of whiteness, I describe the ways in which whiteness is constructed – and thus, provide opportunity for deconstruction. This study shows that key local foods system

participants construct whiteness by utilizing several key frames, which are analyzed in detail in the *Findings* chapter of this paper.

Glossary of Terms

The terms below are defined in the way they are used in this paper:

Agrifood system: the food, fiber, and fuel production system encompassing processes from seed to table – including seed ownership, production, processing, distribution, and marketing.

Alternative agriculture: agricultural production systems or aspects of production systems that are not considered to be conventional, or are alternative to the conventional globalized agricultural system. Local foods systems are a type of alternative agriculture – as are organics, fair trade, etc.

Conventional agriculture: the dominant agrifood production system in the US that typically assumes large-scale industrial production of agrifood products by the utilization of machines and technology, and is distributed via the national or international marketplace.

Frame: the themed normative patterns of expectations drawn upon to discursively participate in a particular space.

Globalized industrial agrifood system: Oftentimes used interchangeably with conventional agriculture; however, this usage emphasizes the globalized nature of the economic relationships characterizing conventional agriculture.

Hegemonic power: sociopolitical dominance and authority.

Local foods movement: the sociopolitical movement supporting local foods systems, a type of alternative agriculture.

Local foods movement participant: someone who is identified as, or self identifies as, a participant in the local foods movement, including those whose paid occupations result in

their participation, and those who otherwise voluntarily participate. Roles include farmers, activists, advocates, extension professionals, gardeners, local and state government officials, organizers, and more.

Local foods system: A type of alternative agriculture and its supporting sociopolitical institutions. A local foods system is characterized by local economic relationships at two or more levels of the agrifood system – i.e., produce that is both grown and sold on-farm, or cheese that is processed locally and sold at a local farmers market (but may or may not be made of local cheese).

People of Color: people who do not identify as white and/or who are not identified by others as white.

Racial inequity: disparity or inequity in individual, social, political, and/or institutional treatment or opportunity as a result of a person being or being perceived as a person of Color.

Sociopolitical: the interaction of social and political factors.

Utterances: data analyzed for discursive frames – in this case, the transcripts of qualitative interviews.

Whiteness: ideology and ways of being that maintain the hegemonic power of white supremacy

White supremacy: the institutional mechanisms that maintain white normalcy, power, and privilege.

Overview

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on discourse analysis, whiteness as discursive identity or a discursive construct, localism and local foods movements, and whiteness and color-blind racism in local foods movements.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my methodology for this paper, including how I collected and analyzed data. I also discuss this study's validity, reliability, and limitations. I explain how and defend why I have analyzed utterances of key local foods systems participants for frames of whiteness.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the results of this study. I identify, analyze, and discuss in detail several common frames that respondents utilized in constructing whiteness. Key to respondents' constructions of whiteness were the frames of *cares about but is not responsible for people of Color's concerns, privileging one's own knowledge, minimization of the importance of race, culture as the problem, and choice or personal responsibility*. Respondents who identified as people of Color utilized similar frames when constructing their perceptions of whiteness, which exposed tensions between concerns expressed by those who did not identify as people of color of being a "well-meaning white" and concerns expressed by those identifying as people of Color of the negative impacts of "well-meaning whites".

In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of these specific findings, and pose questions for future research. Overall, this data suggests that many respondents who did not identify as people of Color acknowledged the concerns of people of Color, but utilized various frames of whiteness – most often the *cares about but is not responsible for* frame – to distance oneself from responsibility for racial inequity and its impacts. I explore how these findings add to our sociological understanding of whiteness and local foods movements, and suggest opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Alternative agriculture movements are situated by some scholar and activist proponents as a system that could address a range of social problems perceived to be characteristic of the globalized agrifood system. In particular, the discourses characterizing alternative agriculture have popularized localism as an alternative to the comparatively placeless globalized conventional industrial agrifood system. Assertions that position localism or local foods movements as an alternative to the globalized conventional industrial agrifood system are oftentimes underpinned by the assumption of the local as a more just, equitable, and ethical alternative.

Local foods movements have become a common discourse of alternative agriculture; however, relatively limited research has been done to critically examine if and how local foods discourse is perpetuating social inequalities typically perceived to be characteristic of the globalized agrifood system that proponents seek to replace. Given that previous research suggests local foods movement spaces are characterized by primarily white participants (Perez, Allen, Brown, & Martha, 2003), further examination of whiteness and racial inequality within local foods movement discourse could help movements work towards the disruption of the inequality typically associated with the conventional agrifood system which proponents seek to replace.

Discourse Analysis

Discourses are characteristic ways of saying, doing, and being (Gee, 2005). Gee (2005) separates Discourses, or big “D” Discourses, from little “d” discourses. Little “d” discourses are language-in-use, while Discourses include other elements of a particular way of being:

Such socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the “right” places and at the “right” times with the “right” objects (associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network”), I will refer to as “Discourses,” with a capital “D.” I will reserve the word “discourse,” with a little “d,” to mean language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories). “Big D” Discourses are always language plus “other stuff.” (Gee, 2005, p. 34).

For example, an individual’s segment of language, or discourse, might be analyzed for linguistic moves such as tonal changes, language usage, and interruptions that establish an individual’s performance as a particular type of person in a conversation. On the other hand, “Big D” Discourse analysis with the same utterance might involve analyzing the individual’s body language, clothing, facial expressions, and more. In other words, individuals evoke characteristic ways of saying, doing, and being with verbal language – but also in other ways. Big “D” discourse encompasses these other ways, while little “d” discourse analyzes language-in-use. The analyst can choose to study little “d” discourse as a part of Discourse, big “D” discourse in its entirety, specific components of big “D” discourse such as attire or body positioning, or any combination thereof.

By evoking a particular discourse in a given situation, individuals establish cultural competency as a particular type of person. Further, by utilizing a Discourse, an individual is engaging in recognition work, or the performance of being recognized as a particular type of person and recognizing others as that particular type of person (Gee, 2005). Discourses are socially acceptable ways of utilizing language, acting, thinking, interacting, presenting, locating

oneself, and more in a situational context that enables recognition of an individual as a particular type of person.

The production of discourse is a result of individuals acting, but of course, individuals are not acting apart from the sociopolitical context they exist within. Individuals draw upon normative patterns of expectation, or frames, that are socially defined to enact utterances (Foster, 2009). Social structures and institutions define normative patterns of expectation and the resulting frames (Van Den Berg, 2003).

There are no definitive tests that determine what it means to be a “real” type of person such as a working-class American, radical feminist, or local foods movement participant. Instead, this recognition work is settled in practice and in particular moments. If, in a given moment, a person has evoked language, interaction, beliefs, objects, and location together in a way that others recognize this individual as a particular type of person engaged in a particular type of activity, then a person has successfully utilized a Discourse (Gee, 2005). The frame is the contextual backdrop that individuals draw upon when evoking a particular Discourse. If the discourse utilized is recognizable, the individual has drawn upon existing Discourse frames that are established normative patterns of expectation. If the utterance is out of place so much that it is not recognizable, it is not a discourse associated with that type of person (i.e., a working-class American). If, however, the evoked Discourse is different in some ways from an accepted Discourse frame but is still recognized, it can serve to change that particular collective Discourse, creating opportunities for Discourse disruption, subversion, and shift (Gee, 2005).

Given that the evoking of Discourse draws upon existing sociopolitical frames, all utterances of Discourse have meaning from the larger social, institutional, and cultural practice of which it is a part of and is performing (Gee, 2005). As a result, the continued individual use of

a particular discourse is central to the persistence of existing sociopolitical institutions. Thus, discourse utilization involves the distribution of social and economic goods via the reification of existing sociopolitical practices. It is the role of the discourse analyst to analyze and describe the rules and normative assumptions of a particular political space, and to make predictions about what we would expect to find as more discourse data is collected and analyzed.

Whiteness as Discursive Identity

For a Discourse analyst, political social spaces do not consist simply of individuals communicating; instead, political and social spaces are comprised of individuals and the Discourses we represent and enact as Discourse carriers (Gee, 2005). Thus, when describing and analyzing the discourse of a particular political space, predefined identity categories such as gender, race, or ethnicity should not be used to divide or analyze discourse utterances (Antaki & Widdicombe, 2008).

The discourse analyst is of course a participant in discourse recognition work, rather than apart from it, and seeks to identify and analyze how and what discourse is relevant and recognizable for a particular discursive space. I identify as white. Thus, the ways in which I analyze and describe whiteness in particular sociopolitical spaces are not separate and apart from my whiteness. Respondents that I converse with in the course of an interview, for example, are constructing discourse in relation to me as a white co-constructor. Further, as Antaki and Widdicombe (2008) argue, a social fact that an analyst assumes to be salient to an individual in a given political space may not be at all. It is the analyst's role to identify what discourses have been evoked and are salient in a particular discursive space at a particular point in time.

Further supporting the claim that predefined identity categories are irrelevant to Discourse analysis, Gee (2000) argues that all people have numerous identities, which are

performances evoked in a given situational context. For Gee, differing Discourses are recognizable in differing situations for the same individual depending on what Discourse(s) an individual is evoking for a given discursive context. It is the Discourse analyst's job to identify and analyze utterances for evidence of a particular Discourse.

Through an individual's evoking of a particular discourse in a given situational context, which draws upon existing sociopolitical frames, sociopolitical institutions are maintained. Given the historical and present-day white supremacy within sociopolitical institutions in the United States, critical race theorists posit that race is a key condition that must be analyzed to understand and disrupt inequality (Omni & Winant, 2014). Positioning race as a central organizing principle of sociopolitical inequality necessitates naming and analyzing the frame(s) that individuals draw upon, as utilization of these frames serves to reify racialized sociopolitical institutions – one such frame is White supremacy, or whiteness (Jenson, 2005). Whiteness is “the ideology and way of being in the world that is used to maintain White [sic] supremacy” (Picower, 2009, p. 198).

Through individuals' utilization of a particular discourse, hegemonic power and powerlessness normatively characterizing a sociopolitical space is maintained. Critical race theorists note that no understanding of any space is complete without recognition that the totality of political and social space in the United States is racialized (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Thus, one can posit that a discourse of whiteness permeates sociopolitical spaces, and that individual utilization of this discourse reifies the racialized nature of spaces (Thomas, 2005). Though whiteness is assumed to permeate the totality of American sociopolitical spaces, the frames underpinning hegemonic power and powerlessness in a particular sociopolitical space can be

analyzed in individuals' discursive utterances (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) to better understand how hegemonic power and powerlessness is maintained, and the possible opportunities for disruption.

Individuals' utilization of a discourse of whiteness can effectively racialize a sociopolitical space. As whiteness is normalized through this process, race itself is reified as a normalized category rather than a sociopolitical construct resulting from human social processes (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994). Whiteness assumes normative status, and is generally normalized such that whiteness is hidden and deemed irrelevant; rather, whiteness is simply "normal" (Doane, 1997). The assumption of whiteness as normative serves to other those who are unable to perform whiteness, leading to social and spatial distance. Because whiteness is the hegemonic standard by which successful discursive performances are measured, "color-blind" racism, or racism that purports to not see any race, permeates discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Color-blind racism maintains hegemonic whitened power by normalizing white discourse to the point of irrelevance as a "recognizable" racial or ethnic category. If an individual is unable to participate in whitened recognition work, they are othered – however, the discourse remains "color-blind".

The discursive performances of individuals play a critical role in the organization and inequality of sociopolitical life, as they in part define political spaces by enabling participation of those who are able to successfully perform recognition work within a given movement discourse. Meanwhile, members of a particular discursive space are able to "other" those who are unable to perform recognizable discourse as non-normative, serving to distinguish participants from non-participants while reifying inequality and whitened normativity.

Localism in Alternative Agriculture Movements

Because global industrial agriculture is understood by movement scholars and activists to have succeeded in part through the creation of intentional 'placelessness', many movement

participants have embraced its opposite – localism – as a solution to problems of placeless globalized industrial agrifood systems (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Localism is defined by scholars as globalism’s opposite, showcasing a mode of binary conceptualization; it is “a process which reverses the trend of globalization by discriminating in favour of the local” (Hines, 2000, p. 5). Further, alternative agriculture movement activists have built local foods systems around the idea of the local as a site of “pure, conflict-free local values and knowledges in resistance to capitalist forces” (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 360), and the place where normative ethics and values flourish.

The normative assumptions underpinning the localism of alternative agriculture movements merit closer examination. What alternative agriculture movements fail to account for when equating the local with justice and equity is that the local is oftentimes a site of inequality, hegemonic domination, and violence (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). To unequivocally assume that locally embedded economic relationships are inherently more just than globalized economic relationships is to assume spatial relations are the same as social relations (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). The positioning of localism as the opposite of globalism reveals a dichotomy that assumes localism as an alternative could produce globalism’s opposite as an outcome:

“Spatial relations are assumed to correspond to desirable forms of social and environmental relations, forcing considerable complexity under a simple spatial referent... Making “local” a proxy for the “good” and “global” a proxy for the “bad” may overstate the value in proximity, which remains unspecified, and obscure more equivocal social and environmental outcomes.” (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 35)

Hinrichs (2003), drawing from Hinrichs, et al. (1998) and Lang (1999) outlines the attributes for the “local” and “global” that characterize some normative assumptions of alternative agriculture movements:

<u>Global</u>	<u>Local</u>
Market economy	Moral economy
An Economics of price	An economic sociology of quality
TNCs [transnational corporations]	Independent artisan producers
dominating	prevailing
Corporate profits	Community well-being
Intensification	Extensification
Large-scale production	Small-scale production
Industrial models	“Natural” models
Monoculture	Bio-diversity
Resource consumption and degradation	Resource protection and regeneration
Relations across distance	Relations of proximity
Commodities across space	Communities in place
Big structures	Voluntary actors
Technocratic rules	Democratic Participation
Homogenization of foods	Regional palates

Positioned as globalism’s opposite, localism can be reactionary in nature, and as a result, proponents sometimes fail to investigate benefits and challenges associated with localism on

their own merit rather than as globalism's assumed opposite. Further, because alternative agriculture movements have coalesced in part around a discourse of reactionary localism, nativist sentiments are sometimes present (Hassanein, 2003). Alternative agriculture movements' use of narratives that assume a shared regional identity can serve to erase historical inequities and power relationships, while "othering" individuals who are unable to participate in a particular region's recognition work.

The quality of food or food systems has, within alternative agriculture movements, been linked with the localness of production (Murdoch, Marsden, & Banks, 2000). Despite the alternative agriculture movement's support of localism, favorable social or environmental outcomes do not always "map neatly onto the spatial content of 'local'" (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 34). Environmentally conscious, agroecological practices are not inherent to local farmers. Similarly, justice and equity are not inherent to local social and economic social relationships.

By virtue of spatial embeddedness, alternative agriculture proponents oftentimes assume local food systems to be characterized by socially-accountable relationships. This assumption of social embeddedness has led to the characterization of local economic and market relationships as non-instrumental and respectful (Hinrichs, 2000). Though the formation of in-person economic relationships enables the possibility of equitable face-to-face interactions, local economic relationships are still characterized by power relations defined in part by external cultural narratives and embodied by local individuals.

Whiteness and Color-Blind Racism in Alternative Agriculture

Narratives of localism are based upon place and the assumption that spatial embeddedness leads to social embeddedness. What we know, however, is that no understanding of place is complete without recognition that the totality of American geography is racialized

(Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Geographers of race note that race-neutral spaces do not exist and that spaces and their institutions are racialized and whitened in part via individuals' evoking of whiteness (Thomas, 2005).

The local foods movement's ability to catalyze political transformation is hampered by its complicity with whiteness (Allen, 2004). Alternative agriculture movements are not only spaces that tend to be characterized by white bodies, but are shaped by practices of whiteness, which has the power to universalize and normalize the values of some while discounting that of others:

“One of the reasons whiteness is so powerful is that it promotes a rearticulation of racisms of the past, incorporates some lessons from the civil rights movement, erases racial differences, and pretends that its values apply to everyone.” (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 394)

It is through this process of whitening and whiteness that participation of those that are othered is inhibited, while possibilities for addressing inequalities are minimized (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). In the case of the local foods systems, whiteness is not characterized by explicitly racist discourse; instead, the discourse of whiteness can ignore or deny racialized implications. (Lyson, 2014) By ignoring implications of a racialized space, whitened discourse can lead to racial homogeneity. These racialized discourses contribute to the formation of the alternative agriculture movement's whitened collective discourse (Lyson, 2014).

Critiques characterizing localism as a narrative that conflates spatial relations with social relations are many (Hinrichs, 2003; Hinrichs, 2000; Murdoch, Marsden, & Banks, 2000; Hassanein, 2003; Hinrichs, Kloppenburg, Stevenson, Lezberg, Hendrickson, & DeMaster, 1998; Lang, 1999; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hines, 2000). However, critical analyses of local foods movement identity, narratives, or discourses/ discursive rules, and normative assumptions and

their racialized implications characterizing movement spaces are less. Given the conflation of local space with economic, social, and environmental justice, analyzing the discourse of local foods movements for the normative patterns and rules governing successful discursive performance can serve to disrupt normative assumptions of whiteness and color-blind racism.

Manifestations of Whiteness in Local Foods Movement Spaces

Whiteness manifests in a variety of narratives that permeate the discourse of localism. The values associated with localism are assumed to be universally applicable. However, the values of localism are marked by whiteness (Guthman, 2008). Whiteness in the localism of alternative agriculture movements has led to racial homogeneity within some local foods movement spaces, which contributes to the formation of a collective identity shared through discourses for movement participation (Lyson, 2014).

Valorization of farmers

In the localism of the alternative agriculture movement, one does not have to look far to see a campaign or program that includes language hailing the importance of “knowing your farmer”. The image of the American farmer has been iconized not only in the alternative agriculture movement, but throughout American culture. Whether it’s the settlers in the iconic *Little House on the Prairie* book (Wilder & Williams, 1953), the family farmer feeding the world in the Super Bowl commercial (Ram Trucks, 2013) or the farmers featured in iconic paintings such as Grant Woods’ *American Gothic* – the small-scale local farmer has been hailed as an American hero. In the local foods movement, the iconizing of American farmers reinforces the romanticized notion of farmers as social and environmental stewards.

What this imagery ignores, however, is the fact that whites have been enabled as “family farmers” via institutions of white supremacy; while land was given away for free to whites,

reconstruction promising land to former slaves failed in the South, Native Americans were exterminated and/or forcibly relocated, and their lands were appropriated and redistributed to whites, Chinese and Japanese people were forbidden from owning land, and native Californio ranchers' lands were stolen and redistributed (Romm, 2001). This romanticization of family farmers and agriculture doesn't necessarily resonate with people of Color in the way that it does with whites, as their collective history recalls the violence, racism, and classism of America's agricultural past and present (Alkon & McCullen, 2011).

By focusing on the (white) farmer as the site of social and environmental stewardship, the invisibility of labor, necessary for the survival of many family farms, is increased. Given that the vast majority of agricultural laborers are Latino (United States Department of Labor, 2010), the local foods movement's valorization of "know your farmer" serves to increase the invisibility of Latino farmworkers who are overwhelmingly responsible for the cultivation of food. Local foods system participants defetishize *how* food is produced, but now *who* produces the food; "knowing the farmer" tends to paint a whitened picture of who actually grows food in the United States:

"By focusing on and heroicizing farm owners, rather than farmworkers, the alternative agriculture movement emphasizes and valorizes the role of whites in the food system rather than people of color" (Alkon & McCullen, 2011, p. 947).

Despite the fact that agriculture in the United States is based upon white land ownership and the labor of people of Color, the valorization of agrarian imagery and "knowing your farmer" continues to permeate the discourses of localism (Guthman, 2008).

Also insensitive to a racialized history of agriculture and labor relations is localism's supposition that *tending the land* is a narrative with the possibility for universal appeal. In Guthman's (2008) analysis of a school garden program, for example, many of the youth of Color

saw their participation as donated labor. It was later learned that the students resented the expectation that they donate labor not only for free, but for white farmers (Guthman, 2008).

Framing of Food Consumption as Choice

Couched within localism's narrative that espouses the importance of "knowing your farmer" is the narrative that it is the responsibility of the consumer to make environmentally and socially responsible food choices. Many food system participants purport that if consumers know where their food comes from, people are willing to pay for local, organic food (Guthman, 2008). Rather than acknowledging that food from a farmers market, for example, is oftentimes expensive and an impossibility for lower socioeconomic status people, movement participants oftentimes cast food purchasing decisions as simply an individual choice (Alkon & McCullen, 2011).

When food purchasing is assumed by movement participants to be a simple individual choice, collective identities that cast low income and people of color as ignorant or careless are enabled via the othering of people who "choose" wrongly. The positioning of food choice as a moral decision effectively normalizes affluence (Alkon & McCullen, 2011):

"...Full cost presumes that all else is equal, even though U.S. agricultural land and labor relations are fundamentally predicated on white privilege. As elucidated by Romm (2001), land was virtually given away to whites at the same time that reconstruction failed in the South, Native American lands were appropriated, Chinese and Japanese were precluded from land ownership, and the Spanish-speaking Californians were disenfranchised of their ranches. Given this history, it is certainly conceivable that for some people knowing where your food comes from and paying the full cost would not have the same aesthetic appeal that it does for white, middle-class alternative food aficionados." (Guthman, 2008, p. 394)

White Desire to “Convert” People of Color

Though discourses of consumer choice serve to normalize affluence and whiteness, alternative agriculture movements do work to “do good” and “bring good food” to communities of color (Slocum, 2007). Though scholars such as Slocum see the transformative potential of progressive whiteness, others argue that the intention to do good on behalf of those considered “other” has undertones of historical colonialism (Guthman, 2008). For Guthman, seeking to educate or improve the other while negating or ignoring the historical contextual variables that produced inequalities of capital and food access in the first place serves to reinforce the normalization of affluence and whiteness.

The colonialist underpinnings of “bringing good food to others” is further evidenced in the discourses that permeate localism. Areas that do not have access to a grocery store with fresh food, for example, are often characterized as “food deserts”. The concept of “food desert” invokes imagery of places that are beyond repair, or even deserted from specific processes that led to their current state; similar to once-commonly accepted language characterizing the “dark continent”, the concept of “food desert” is layered with colonial coding (Guthman, 2008). Further, conversion efforts in communities of color have come under scrutiny not only because of coding characterized by some scholars as colonial in nature, but because conversion efforts in white communities are largely unseen, or at least are undocumented:

“It may be the case that working-class or, more likely, less formally educated whites do not participate equal to their [more affluent whites’] numbers either, but neither have been subject to the same sort of scrutiny regarding their food provisioning practices, including attempts to enroll them in alternative food practice.” (Guthman, 2008)

Looking Ahead

The research on whiteness in local foods movements are minimal and fairly recent; only a handful of scholars have examined whiteness in local foods movements. Though a small body of sociological research, authors such as Guthman, Lyson, Slocum, Allen, McKullen, and Alkon have come to similar conclusions based upon localized studies: a collective identity of whiteness permeates the alternative agriculture and local foods movement, and many bodies occupying local foods movement spaces are white.

To date, examination of exactly how local foods systems participants construct whiteness through movement discourse is nonexistent. As a result of white supremacy within sociopolitical institutions in the United States, whiteness is a key condition that must be analyzed to understand and disrupt inequality (Omni & Winant, 2014). The evoking of a particular Discourse, such as whiteness, draws upon existing sociopolitical frames which have meaning from the larger social, institutional, and cultural practices of which it is part of and performing (Gee, 2005). Thus, an individual's continued use of a particular discourse is central to the persistence of existing sociopolitical institutions – including white supremacy. It is the role of the discourse analyst to analyze and describe the rules and normative assumptions of a particular political space. This analysis not only describes the specific ways in which whiteness is constructed and whiteness is maintained, but provides opportunity for discourse disruption and shift. If the Discourse evoked and recognized by the analysis is different in some ways from an accepted discourse frame but is still recognized, it can serve to change that particular collective Discourse, creating opportunities for Discourse disruption, subversion, and shift (Gee, 2005).

Given that the evoking of Discourse draws upon existing sociopolitical frames, all utterances of Discourse have meaning from the larger social, institutional, and cultural practice

of which it is a part of and is performing (Gee, 2005). As a result, the continued individual use of a particular discourse is central to the persistence of existing sociopolitical institutions. Thus, discourse utilization involves the distribution of social and economic goods via the reification of existing sociopolitical practices. It is the role of the discourse analyst to analyze and describe the rules and normative assumptions of a particular political space. By analyzing local foods movement discourse, sociologists can identify how whiteness is constructed and operates in local foods movements, and can provide opportunities for discourse shifts and the disruption of hegemonic power.

CHAPTER 3: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand how whiteness operates through the discourse of local foods system participants. Specifically, this study seeks to answer “*How does whiteness operate through the discourse of local foods system participants?*” Given that local foods system spaces, as is the case with all spaces, are characterized by whiteness and its normative discourse, further examination of how whiteness manifests within local foods systems could help participants work towards the disruption of whiteness and the injustices typically associated with the conventional agrifood system that local foods systems participants seek to replace. To describe how whiteness operates through the discourse of local foods movement participants, I analyze discursive utterances contained in qualitative interview data. In this chapter, I discuss my data collection and analysis, as well as provide explanation as to why utilized methods were chosen and the strengths of utilizing this particular data.

Data Collection

In-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in July through September of 2015 as part of a larger study. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the Wallace Center at Winrock International funded this larger applied study, *Enabling Environments for the Development of Local Food Systems*, which sought to understand enabling factors and hindrances to local foods systems development in case study communities. Data from this larger study was later discursively analyzed for whiteness, which is what this paper discusses in detail.

I was interested in investigating enabling environments for the development of local foods systems because communities investing significant efforts in local foods systems work experience differential successes. For example, as a local food system extension researcher and

participant, I oftentimes anecdotally heard colleagues from one community discuss the success of a popular farmer-led market for refugee and new American farmers, while colleagues in another community commiserated that not a single person of Color had frequented their food council meetings all year. Through the *Enabling Environments* study, I sought to understand what resources, relationships, policies, and other factors participants felt were leading to their specific experienced local foods systems successes, and what was leading to their specific local foods systems challenges.

I was the principal investigator and only interviewer for the *Enabling Environments* study. I collected interview data in six case study communities. These case study communities were selected in part via a survey that was distributed to several prominent listservs frequented by the local foods system community, including the North American Food Systems listserv and the eXtension Community of Practice on Community, Local & Regional Food Systems listserv. This survey asked participants to identify their perceptions of top local food systems regionally and nationwide. No pre-defined criteria for “top local foods systems” was given; instead, participants were asked to identify top local food systems, and were then given the option to qualitatively describe the reasons for their choices in an open-ended survey question.

The six communities ultimately selected for participation in the *Enabling Environments* study were survey participants’ modal choices that met one of several demographic profiles, ensuring case study communities with differing contextual variables (geographic location – Iowa or elsewhere, population density, racial/ethnic diversity, and median income). I ultimately selected Burlington, Vermont; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Portland, Oregon as case study communities, thereby providing me with data from communities with varying median incomes, percent of population as white, and population density based on the 2010 US Census and

Community Survey data. Additionally, because a significant portion of *Enabling Environments* funding came from institutions based in Iowa who were interested in Iowa communities (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture), I selected three Iowa communities – Decorah, Iowa; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Des Moines, Iowa. These communities were modal choices of communities located in Iowa on the survey, and similarly were selected to provide me with data from communities with varying median incomes, percent of population as white, and population density. It was important to select case studies with differing contextual variables because I, in partnership with funding institutions, will develop education and outreach materials based upon findings from the *Enabling Environments* study for local foods systems practitioners and extension agents working in communities that exist within a variety of contexts.

Key informants were identified for each case study community, and were asked to identify “active, engaged key local food system participants”. Key informants were encouraged to self-define active, engaged key local foods system movement participants. I selected key informants affiliated with organizations that were major funders or facilitators of local foods systems work in the region their case study community was located. The organizations that key informants were affiliated with each had an explicit stated mission related to local foods system development. Upon contact with interview respondents, snowball sampling was utilized to identify additional respondents. Interview participants ultimately included farmers, researchers, activists, practitioners, and advocates who were identified as active, engaged key local foods system movement participants by key informants

I requested interviews by email, and followed up with telephone calls when requested by respondents to further explain the study or answer questions (see Appendix 1 for a sample

introductory email). I visited each community for one week between July and September 2015 to conduct in-person interviews. Several respondents were unable to meet during the scheduled in-person community visit necessitating phone interviews; however, the vast majority of interviews were conducted in-person. Seventy interviews in total were completed across the six case study communities.

Verbal informed consent documents were read to all interview participants (see [Appendix 2](#)). Verbal informed consent documents were used with each respondent because based on my experience with previous research, respondents may not read a written informed consent document before signing, and as a result, may finish the interview and then ask questions regarding the confidentiality of data or how the data will be used. A detailed explanation of the study was given and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they had. After consent had been given but before the interview officially began, I asked participants for their permission to record the interview; no one declined.

An interview guide was put together detailing question prompts (see [Appendix 3](#)). The *Enabling Environments* study sought to understand perceptions of enabling and hindering factors within each case study community, and interview prompts reflect this by asking how each of seven different aspects of community and place, or community capitals (Emery & Flora, 2006), has impacted their work. The Community Capitals Framework is a tool based upon research indicating that communities supporting a vital economy, social inclusion, and healthy ecosystems typically place an importance on seven types of capital: financial, political, social, human, cultural, natural, and built (Emery & Flora, 2006). Thus, interviews consisted of a semi-structured conversation regarding each of the seven aforementioned capitals, and how access to

and/or utilization of each of these capitals have impacted (or not) respondents' local foods systems work.

Though an interview guide was used, it primarily served as a checklist to remind myself to ask respondents to cover a particular aspect of their food systems work if it had not already come up. For example, I started each interview by asking respondents to tell me about their local foods systems work – some respondents then covered in detail how lack of financial resources within their community significantly hindered their work. Thus, I did not need to prompt this respondent separately to discuss financial capital.

Using qualitative methods, I collected data via interviews that were later discursively analyzed; the results of this discourse analysis are discussed in detail in this paper. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews for the larger *Enabling Environments* study so as to explore respondents' work in the local foods movement in an in-depth, descriptive way. Qualitative semi-structured interviewing enables complex social problems to be described in the words of the respondent, and enables the researcher to analyze meaning in context of particular situations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The complex social problem discussed by respondents in this case were the successes and challenges associated with their local foods systems work, and perceived contributing factors. Because the aim of the *Enabling Environments* study was to understand participants' perceptions of enabling and hindering factors to their local food systems work, semi-structured interviews were chosen because they would yield data with in-depth descriptive explanations, detailed language defining participation, and the time and space to explore their thoughts regarding the successes and challenges of their work.

Each interview was transcribed by a transcription professional. Each interview and its transcription was given a code number and was subsequently identified by this number – no

names or identifying information were tied to interview responses at any time. Names of organizations respondents are affiliated with will not be included in any *Enabling Environments* results. The *Enabling Environments* study has IRB approval via exemption, and all IRB guidelines were followed throughout the course of the project (see [Appendix 4](#)). The request for exemption through IRB stated that discourses of participants would be further analyzed, therefore, the emergent additional investigation of respondent discourses, the topic of this paper, is covered as well.

I used NVivo to code for each of the seven aspects of community (community capitals) included in the interview guide, and responses not fitting one of the seven community capitals were open-coded. An emerging theme was apparent across the data – respondents were struggling with racial inequality, inclusion, diversity, and whiteness in their work.

Because respondents discussed at length the nature of their local foods systems work and the challenges, successes, and contextual variables that characterized their work, this data collection method also yielded rich data for discursive analysis. As respondents expressed challenges associated with racial inequality, inclusion, diversity, and whiteness, I was motivated to do a more in-depth discourse analysis on a subset of the data, which is the topic of this paper. I identify as white; thus, the ways in which respondents spoke to me regarding their challenges associated with racial inequality were not separate and apart from my whiteness. Each respondent that I conversed with in the course of an interview constructed discourse in relation to the ways in which I constructed discourse – including my positionality as white, as well as additional discursive constructions respondents may have noticed (woman, researcher, etc.) are important to consider when considering my findings resulting from this study.

Discourse Analysis

The transcriptions of 70 interviews conducted for the *Enabling Environments* study offered an abundance of data to draw from for a discursive analysis of how whiteness is constructed by local foods movement participants.. I read and coded all 70 interviews for the *Enabling Environments* study. For the purposes of this research, I used a sample of 14 interviews from across the six communities included in the larger *Enabling Environments* data set. I sampled interview transcripts that clearly addressed my original research question of “how does whiteness operate through the discourse of local foods systems participants?” I continued sampling and coding interview transcripts one by one from the larger pool of 70 interview transcripts until convergence around several emergent themes of whiteness was reached. Convergence is discussed in more detail in the *Validity and Reliability* section of this chapter.

I used utterances (data) located within interviews to study the ways that whiteness operates through the discourse of local foods movement participants. Utterances, or written and spoken language-in-use, are a unit of analysis for discourse analysis. Though utterances are only one aspect that comprise Gee’s big “D” Discourse, utterances communicate socially situated identities of those “doing” the uttering; I utilize the transcribed verbal utterances of interview respondents to understand how the language use of respondents produce discursive whiteness in the local foods movement, regardless of how any individual respondent might explicitly racially/ethnically self- identify.

I analyze how whiteness operates through the discourse of local foods movement participants by identifying and analyzing how respondents construct whiteness, as well as how they utilize and contest narratives of whiteness that have been identified by previous research to exist across a range of institutions and spaces.

To do this, I have utilized a three-step process for each interview transcript used in my analysis. I first identified and categorized types of utterances, then analyzed those categorized utterances for linguistic details that construct whiteness. Lastly, I sought to integrate this analysis of constructs of whiteness into a larger understanding of whiteness by coding for key frames of whiteness as established by previous literature.

To identify and categorize types of utterances, I utilized Gee's (2005) tools of inquiry. Gee asserts that we can use several tools of inquiry to identify and categorize types of utterances. Thus, I began analyzing how whiteness operates through the discourse of respondents by identifying and coding for the following types of utterances, as relevant to the investigation of whiteness, based on an adaptation of Gee's (2005) tools of inquiry:

- **Situated meaning:** an utterance that guides listeners and readers in constructing specific meanings based on what was said and the context in which it was said. For example, "the tea spilled, get a mop" and "the tea spilled, get a broom" constructs different meanings of "tea". To analyze the situated meaning requires the identification of relevant contexts within which the text is placed.
- **Social language:** any utterance associated with a socially situated identity of any type, such as that associated with a social group, profession, dialect, or culture.
- **Figured world:** utterances evoking a theory, story, model, or image of a simplified concept that captures what is taken to be typical, normal, or right. A figured world is a socially constructed way of recognizing particular characters and actors and actions and assigning them significance and value. For example, an "appropriate" marriage, kitchen, or way of exercising are all figured worlds.

- Intertextuality: utterances alluding to or relating to other “texts”. This includes cross-referencing or quoting another social language.
- Conversations: utterances that reference common debates in society or within specific social groups over focused issues, and people of a particular social group generally recognize what “sides” there are what “type” of people tend to be on each side.

After coding for the above types of utterances, I analyzed how each coded utterance’s linguistic details were utilized to construct whiteness. Gee argues that our use of language constructs and reifies meaning, and when we speak, write, or otherwise produce utterances, we construct in several ways, called building tasks. To analyze for these building tasks, Gee suggests asking the following questions about each utterance:

- Does/ how is this language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?
- What practice or practices, if any, is this language being used to enact or to get others to recognize as going on?
- What identity or identities, if any, is this piece of language being used to enact? What identity or identities is this piece of language attributing to others and how does this help the speaker or writer enact his or her own identity?
- What sort of relationship or relationships, if any, is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)?
- Is this language communicating what is taken to be “normal”, “right”, “good”, “correct”, “proper”, or “valuable”? How?
- Does this piece of language connect or disconnect things, and how does it make one thing relevant to another? How?

- Does this language privilege or disprivilege specific knowledges or different ways of knowing and believing? How?

Data within each utterance category (Gee's tools of inquiry) were open-coded to answer to each of the above building tasks. For example, a list of all utterances in an interview categorized as using a situated meaning would be pulled. I would then select an utterance and analyze if and how the specific situated meaning was used to enact a particular identity. I would then open code for identity (i.e., "social justice advocate"). The same utterance would then be investigated and coded for the remaining six building tasks. I would repeat the aforementioned process for all utterances categorized as utilizing a situated meaning. I would then pull a list of all utterances using a social language – the next type of utterance. This process is repeated until all relevant utterances have been analyzed via each of the building tasks. Through this process, themes began to emerge across data, characterizing several key ways whiteness was constructed. These themes are analyzed in detail in the *Findings* chapter of this paper.

By analyzing the data for exactly how whiteness is constructed by respondents via Gee's (2005) tools of inquiry and building tasks, I was able to analyze how different frames of whiteness operate through discursive construction by interview respondents. Out of this, themes emerged that begin to answer my original research question, "*How does whiteness operate through the Discourse of local foods movements?*"

Lastly, I sought to integrate this data into a larger understanding of whiteness by identifying and analyzing how these patterns are historically situated. In analyzing utterances for the production of whiteness, I examined the literature for key frames and definitions of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Using Bonilla-Silva's (2014) established frames of whiteness and color-blind racism as a guide, I compared my findings regarding discursive constructions of whiteness

and color-blind racism with Bonilla-Silva's. A detailed explanation of this analysis is discussed in the *Findings* chapter of this paper.

Validity and Reliability

A discourse analysis is simply one interpretation of peoples' interpretive performances in a given context; thus, establishing validity and reliability in a discourse analysis is not making an argument that the analysis reflects the "reality" of the given analyzed context (Gee, 2005).

Instead, reliability and validity is established by demonstrating that the analyzed building tasks are in fact building the discourse your analysis asserts – in this case, whiteness. This is can be done via any of the following four ways (Gee, 2005):

- **Convergence:** the more the answers to aforementioned building tasks converge and offer compatible answers, the more valid and reliable a discourse analysis is.
- **Agreement:** the more "native speakers", "members", or outside observers of the Discourses evoked in data agree that the analysis reflects what you purport it to reflect, the more valid and reliable a discourse analysis is.
- **Coverage:** the more this analysis does or could be applied to related sorts of data (i.e., other sorts of utterances in a similar context), the more valid and reliable a discourse analysis is.
- **Linguistic details:** the more the analysis is tied to linguistic structure and grammar, the more valid and reliable a discourse analysis is.

As Gee (2005) explains, the above constitutes validity because it is not probable that the above, or pieces of the above, would converge to support an analysis unless the analysis was valid:

“This, of course, does not mean the analysis is true or correct in every respect. Empirical science is social and accumulative in that investigators build on each other’s work in ways that, in the long run, we hope, improves it. It does mean, however, that a “valid” analysis explains things that any future investigation of the same data, or related data, will have to take seriously into account.” (Gee, 2005, p. 124)

Gee goes on to explain that validity and reliability is argued by seeking agreement on some of the aforementioned components of validity and reliability, though no analyst can or should seek to cover all aspects.

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to ensure validity and reliability by focusing on convergence and coverage. To ensure convergence, I am analyzing a rather large sampling of utterances, including utterances from 14 in-depth interviews with food system participants occupying diverse roles in the local foods system, including practitioners, researchers, advocates, activists, and farmers. To ensure coverage, I have utilized existing theoretical understandings of whiteness and built upon previous findings regarding whiteness and local foods systems movements. In the following chapter, I present the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As Foster (2009) suggests, individuals draw upon frames, or socio-politically normative patterns of action in a particular space, in order to successfully participate in and be recognized as a particular type of person engaged in a particular type of activity. Thus, the frame (or theme) is the contextual backdrop that individuals draw upon when evoking a particular discourse. In this case, the discourse of active, engaged, key local food system participants. I have analyzed how 14 respondents construct whiteness via Gee's (2005) method of discourse analysis. Through this discourse analysis, I was able to identify several common frames that respondents utilized in constructing whiteness. These emergent themes speak to my original research question, "*How does whiteness operate through the Discourse of local foods movement participants?*"

I identified the following frames, discussed in detail in this chapter, as key to respondents' constructions of whiteness: cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns, privileging one's own knowledge, minimization of the importance of race, culture as the problem, and choice or personal responsibility. Utterances are categorized as 'cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns' when the respondent acknowledges concerns regarding racial inequity, but indicates they or their organization are not responsible for addressing such concerns. Utterances are categorized as 'privileging one's own knowledge' when the respondent indicates that their knowledge and/or value systems are more important or more correct than those of people of Color'. Utterances are categorized as 'minimization of the importance of race' when respondents communicate race and its impacts are as important or relevant to their work. Utterances are categorized as 'culture as the problem' when respondents indicate that people of Colors' dissatisfaction with or lack of participation in local foods systems work is a result of the culture of people of Color. Utterances are categorized as 'choice or

personal responsibility' when respondents indicate that involvement in local foods systems related activities are a matter of choice and/or personal responsibility.

For the purpose of organization, each of these themes and their construction by respondents is analyzed in detail in distinct sections. However, these frames are not mutually exclusive and were not typically utilized in isolation from one another by respondents. For example, in some cases respondents minimized the importance of racial inequity by explaining racial inequity via the "culture of African Americans", thus drawing upon several frames.

Regardless of the utilized frame, respondents' constructions of whiteness oftentimes lacked any explicit mention of race; instead, participants used color-blind language to reference race. Respondents would, for example, mention that they worked primarily with people of Color who lived in a public housing, but would proceed to use coded language such as "people in public housing". The language used for the remainder of the interview failed to explicitly mention race but suggests racialized meaning and to attributes particular characteristics to a person or a community they worked with.

Though respondents' own constructions of whiteness are the focus of this paper, I provide an analysis of interview responses from two respondents who self-identify racially or ethnically as an identity that falls under the broader category of people of Color. I analyze how these respondents construct their perceptions of whiteness and its impacts on their local foods systems work. I do this to contextualize the impacts of whiteness on people of Color in this study who are also active, engaged, key local foods systems participants. Overall, these respondents construct their perceptions of whiteness and its impacts on their own local foods systems work utilizing similar frames to those actively evoked by respondents as a whole. I also seek to integrate this data into a larger understanding of whiteness by briefly discussing how these

identified frames are situated in the established literature on whiteness. Using Bonilla-Silva's (2014) established frames of whiteness and color-blind racism as a guide, I compare my findings regarding respondents' utilized frames of whiteness with Bonilla-Silva's frames of whiteness.

Below, I describe and analyze in detail the frames utilized by respondents to construct whiteness. I then contextualize these constructions of whiteness by briefly analyzing frames utilized by respondents who are people of Color when referencing whiteness. Finally, I situated my findings in the larger literature on whiteness by comparing the aforementioned themes with Bonilla-Silva's (2014) frames of whiteness. Table 1 shows how many separate occasions each frame was utilized and the number of individual respondents exhibiting each individual frame.

Table 1: Frames Utilized by Respondents

Theme	Frequency of Theme Present	Number of Respondents Utilizing Theme
Care about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns	42	10
Privileging one's own knowledge	32	11
Minimization of the importance of race	32	11
Culture as the problem	22	5
Choice or personal responsibility	15	5

Cares About But is Not Responsible for People of Colors' Concerns

The most common way whiteness was constructed by respondents was by acknowledging racial inequity; this acknowledgement was followed most often by expressions of guilt,

frustration, or a lack of personal or organizational responsibility over participation in work that addresses racial inequity. Overall, acknowledgements of racial inequity were followed by expressions in one of two categories. Some participants indicated that it is not their own and/or their affiliated organizations' responsibility to take action regarding racial inequity, while other respondents expressed concern or guilt coupled with indications that they felt they had done enough or all they could to address racial inequity. Participants deemphasized their own responsibility for participating in work that addresses racial inequity in a variety of ways, including arguing that racial inequity will be addressed at a later date, insisting they have "done their duty" by trying in the past, or by naming a specific co-worker or colleague who works on racial inequity on behalf of their organization or sector, while participants deemphasized their affiliated organizations' responsibility for participating in work that addresses racial inequity by suggesting that it is another organization's job to work on racial equity.

Respondents oftentimes first constructed credibility as a local foods system professional by citing or referencing their professional position and utilizing associated social languages, or language one would recognize as associated with a particular profession such as technical rhetoric, jargon, or colloquialisms. After credibility is built, respondents then deemphasized their own or their affiliated organizations' responsibility for participating in work that addresses racial inequity. For example, one respondent, when asked if and how collaboration with culturally diverse communities had impacted their work, spent significant time building their credibility as a government employee. After doing so, this participant briefly explained she was thankful another nongovernmental organization and young people are addressing "racial and ethnic diversity":

“And I, you know, I’ve worked in public health for many years and I think that there is a lot of tension... Like for me, within the farm to school community, I mean, there isn’t a lot of -- there isn’t a lot of, I would say, racial or ethnic diversity but ... And so that is something, although with some of the components of farm to school like FoodCorps, they’re serving in low income schools and, often they are schools that are more diverse, either in class or race and ethnicity... And so they ask a lot of questions about how to do that. And so we, you know, I – there’s only so many things that I can do. It’s really interesting to be within a government context because there’s such, there’s a lot of risk adversity and so, I mean, I’m trying, I’m definitely trying to move the conversation places where I can... There are far more young people coming into this, you know, yourself included with a lot more – they’re carrying the weight of that conversation and I’m so appreciative of it.”

In the above example, the participant deemphasized their own and their organization’s responsibility for addressing concerns regarding “racial and ethnic diversity” by building credibility as a governmental public health official. The participant went on to emphasize the challenges associated with addressing concerns regarding racial and ethnic diversity in a government context, and then expressed gratitude for other organizations’ work. The participant suggests working on “racial and ethnic diversity” practices are risky when working in government, and says there’s “only so many things” they can do. The participant then capitalizes on their constructed credibility by asserting they are appreciative that others are doing racial and ethnic diversity work. Thus, the participant has deemphasized their own and their governmental organization’s responsibility for participating in work that addresses racial inequity by building credibility as a governmental employee and building the significance of the work of others.

Similarly, many respondents asserted the nature of their position and/or affiliated organization prevented them from addressing acknowledged concerns of racial inequity. Working at a university, working for the government, and working for a non-profit organization with limited resources were all cited by respondents as reasons they were not responsible for participating in work relating to racial inequity.

Respondents also defended their own lack of engagement in work that addresses racial inequity by expressing fear of doing the work incorrectly or of doing the work in a way that may cause more harm than good. One respondent, who works for a university, acknowledged it is “stupid” that she does not speak Spanish, but implied fear that speaking Spanish would not be helpful:

“I think the fact that I don't speak Spanish is stupid for me, that my children are learning Spanish in their school and that would certainly make it easier for me to engage in this work. But I also – I'm really careful about it. You know, I don't pretend to know what their challenges are and I don't want to be yet another well-meaning white girl who comes off as not knowing her ass from third base, you know. I mean, we have our, so you know what I mean? It's just, it's complicated.”

The above respondent references the negative cultural meme of “well-meaning white girl” to ultimately absolve herself of responsibility for participating in work that could address her own previously acknowledged concern of the lack of participation of Latinos in local foods systems work. Through the above language, the respondent seems to construct an identity apart from that of the “well-meaning white girl”, distancing herself from work that a “well-meaning white girl” would do – in this case, learning Spanish. Thus, the respondent has justified her own inaction by associating action with that of the negative “well-meaning white girl”.

Similarly, respondents defended their lack of responsibility for participating in work that would address acknowledged concerns regarding racial inequity by arguing that the work would be done at a later, more applicable time. Participants' acknowledgements of racial inequity and defense of their or their organizations' responsibility for participating in work that addresses racial inequity sometimes served to minimize the importance of racial equity. Respondents sometimes asserted that addressing concerns of racial inequity would happen after their projects were started, "off the ground", or "doing well". This suggests that participants did not consider racial equity work to be a precursor for a project to be started, "off the ground" or "doing well". One respondent, for example, acknowledged the importance of engaging "cultures", but went on to explain that conversations and work regarding inequity would happen at a later time after the garden was "in the ground":

"Culturally, there's nothing that we have tapped into or worked with... Part of our deal with just getting it [the garden] in the ground... You know, so that's a hard thing for folks to understand."

Privileging One's Own Knowledge

Respondents also frequently privileged their own knowledge over that of people of Color. In particular, they asserted their own knowledge and beliefs were correct regarding the importance and/or value of local foods, the efficacy of their local foods systems work in communities of Color, and the importance (or lack thereof) of work that addresses racial inequity. Despite acknowledged disagreement from people of Color on a variety of aspects of their local foods systems work, respondents typically maintained that their own understanding of local foods systems work was right and correct – thus discrediting the knowledge, beliefs, and lived experiences of people of Color.

This discrediting was often accomplished by refuting claims made by people of Color, followed by the utilization of language that signified one's authority or expertise in local foods systems work or one's favorable personality traits or moral values. Other times, participants simply reference one's "passion" for local foods systems work when responding to concerns or critiques from people of Color. Respondents sometimes go on to suggest that the presence of passion in their work should exclude them from critique. One respondent, who constructs community gardens in neighborhoods that are predominantly African American, explained that African Americans tell her they do not want her help, but it's something she's "really passionate about":

"Well, we have a big racial issue here in Milwaukee and, as a white woman going into the inner city, a lot of times, people just kind of look at you like 'what the hell you doing here, bitch?' I mean, really, it's just that like 'we don't need your kind of help' But I haven't, you know, like I don't come off as a total jerk so most people don't treat me that way... I'm just here cause this is something I'm really passionate about."

This respondent discredits the knowledge of African Americans who live in the "inner city" neighborhoods where she constructs gardens in a variety of ways. In the above excerpt, the respondent reports a quote that is implied to be representative of African Americans' critiques of her work. This quote, particularly in the context of the rest of the respondents' utterances throughout our interview, seems to actively position her work as justified, and the critiques of the African Americans she references as unjustified. The respondent quotes African Americans as particularly harsh, utilizing the expletive "bitch" in her characterization of their critique – it is of note that this respondent did not use expletives in our interview except when purporting to quote African Americans. The respondent then goes on to suggest that "most people" don't treat her

that way because she is not a “total jerk”, thereby expressing confusion as to why African Americans would treat her in such a way. Thus, this respondent signifies that the aforementioned critiques by African Americans are not a critique of her work, but rather a critique of her as a person. Further, the respondent has utilized a purported quote of African Americans’ critiques of her work, suggesting such critiques are unfair because other people don’t treat her that way. The respondent further discredits the critiques of the quoted African Americans by explaining she is working in their neighborhoods because it’s something she is “really passionate about”, suggesting that the African Americans she has quoted simply don’t understand her “passion”.

Many respondents utilized a frame similar to the example above. If critiques of people of Color were acknowledged, the referencing of one’s own knowledge, passion, or authority was typically utilized to refute such critiques. All respondents utilizing such a frame failed to acknowledge why people of Color may have specific critiques. When utilizing this frame, no respondent mentioned structural racism and/or inequality and its historic and present-day implications as a factor impacting the critiques of people of Color.

Similarly, respondents oftentimes suggested their own ownership or control over local foods systems work in communities of Color. Ownership or control was oftentimes exercised by privileging one’s own local foods systems knowledge or values. One respondent, who constructs community gardens in predominantly African American neighborhoods, indicated ownership when an area resident expressed interest in planting his plants that the respondent did not think should be planted in the community garden:

“The one, I wasn't too crazy when I told him he couldn't just bring his own plants over and just plant whatever he wanted. I'm like no, like we're doing this like controlled organic, no I don't want your GMO seeds in my garden bed.”

In the above example, the respondent signifies ownership over the garden by asserting that the resident could not “just plant whatever he wanted” in the respondent’s garden bed; the respondent directly references ownership of the garden by asserting “... I don’t want your GMO seeds in my garden bed”, despite the respondents’ previous acknowledgement that the garden is intended to be a community space. This respondent, like many, has signified that she perceives her own way of performing local foods systems work as correct as a mechanism for asserting ownership or control over a garden in a predominantly African American neighborhood.

Minimization of the Importance of Race

Respondents also constructed whiteness by minimizing the importance or impacts of race in local foods systems work. The minimization of the importance of race was oftentimes coupled with several other identified frames of whiteness – in particular, the practice of privileging one’s own knowledge. For example, many respondents would acknowledge a common concern regarding racial inequity in local foods systems work, but would justify their own inaction by minimizing the importance of race and thus suggesting that the concern is unwarranted.

Respondents employed a variety of techniques that minimized the importance or impact of race on local foods systems work. Techniques include suggesting that people of Color are not interested in local foods work, denying people of Color exist in their geographic region, asserting concerns regarding race and local foods systems work do not apply, assuming everyone supports their local foods work regardless of race, insisting that a focus on outreach to “everyone” is fair, or simply asserting that working with people of Color is not relevant to local foods systems work as a whole. Further, participants oftentimes used color-blind coded language when referencing people or communities of color. “Underprivileged” was the most-utilized coded term utilized when referencing people or communities of color. Color-blind language such as the term

“underprivileged” was used especially often in utterances where respondents were minimizing the importance or impact of race on local foods systems work.

One respondent, a university extension employee who works directly with farmers producing for local markets, was asked if cultural contextual variables had impacted their local foods systems work. This individual responded by suggesting that there were not diverse populations in his area, despite a sizable population of people of Color within his official region of service:

“So we haven't really ... I mean, it's pretty ... It's pretty monochromatic up here. I mean, if you look down, well, going to drive down the street and if, you see a Black person, I'll be very, very surprised.”

Further, when later asked specifically about the existence of people of Color who are farmers, this participant acknowledged the existence of a sizable Latino population, but asserted that are not currently farming and he did not believe they were interested in farming:

“You know, maybe there's some of the Hispanic population in Postville, some of the, there's Nigerians as well over there that were brought to work in the plants. You know, whether that, you know, whether those people actually have an interest in farming or not, I don't think that's, I don't think it's true.”

When prompted, this respondent later went on to explain that in the past year they had not talked to any people of Color on the job – thus, we can assume he had no way to know whether any people of Color were interested in farming. The above respondent, like many, utilized a variety of techniques that served to minimize the importance and impacts of race on local foods systems work. By first suggesting people of Color did not exist in the region and later acknowledging their existence but asserting their lack of interest in local foods systems work,

this respondent suggests that they need not consider the importance or impact of race in their local foods systems work. Other respondents similarly suggest people of Color did not exist in their region, but later acknowledged their existence while minimizing the importance or impacts of race on local foods systems work by asserting that many white farmers are oppressed and lack capital, too.

Similarly, many respondents asserted the importance of focusing on “everyone” rather than specific oppressed populations – thus minimizing the importance or impacts of race on local foods systems work. When making such assertions, respondents typically did not reference race, socioeconomic status, or other minoritized statuses directly, but would rather suggest the focus on “underprivileged” populations was misguided:

“Everyone focuses on underprivileged families and finally, when I'm like, okay, wait a minute, there's a lot of really privileged children out there who eat terribly. I said food systems should encompass everyone. I said it shouldn't just, it shouldn't be just focused on underprivileged families, we should be focused on everyone being able to eat local foods... If you make a social change and people eat local food, a lot of times, that has to start at the top and, if the haves are eating local food and, I mean, I think there is a trickle down of that.”

The above respondent utilizes language that builds the significance of continuing work that does not “focus on underprivileged families”. The respondent then seems to contradict themselves by suggesting it is acceptable to focus on the “haves” because the effects of the “haves” eating local food will “trickle down”. Many respondents used similar techniques to minimize the relevance of race on local foods systems work, suggesting that this work is about “everyone” – but for many respondents, “everyone” does not explicitly include people of Color.

Similarly, many respondents asserted that a “common language” existed for local foods systems work, thus addressing implications of race on local foods systems is unnecessary.

Culture as the Problem

Respondents also constructed whiteness by suggesting that people of Colors’ dissatisfaction with or lack of participation in local foods systems work is a result of the culture of people of Color. Referencing the culture of people of Color to explain perceived problems minimizes or denies the impacts of structural inequity, and thus places the responsibility for racial disparities on people of Color themselves (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Though utilized by relatively fewer respondents (5), those who did utilized the frame heavily, evidenced by the 22 separate occasions culture as the problem was referenced by respondents. This frame was particularly common when respondents sought to justify the lack of participation of people of Color or people of Colors’ concerns regarding their local foods systems work. This frame was often utilized while simultaneously minimizing the importance and impacts of race on local foods systems work and minimizing one’s own or one’s organization’s responsibility of addressing impacts associated with racial inequity. For example, one respondent who had reported receiving numerous complaints from African Americans regarding the community garden they had constructed as a part of a “Christian mission” to serve the neighborhood, signals that the culture of African Americans is perhaps the reason for these complaints:

“It’s been harder in my, in this immediate area and I think there’s lots of things to do with that. You know, I think race is a big issue, me, not being from this neighborhood...You know, I’ve been told to take my garden and go back to West Des Moines where I’m from, yeah. And that’s, that’s been the biggest thing. And I don’t know if it’s culture or race – or probably both.”

Many respondents similarly suggest that African Americans are particularly defensive of their neighborhoods due to “culture”. All respondents utilizing this frame failed to signify that the concerns, complaints, or reluctance expressed by people of Color were a result of respondents’ own local foods systems work or due to structural inequity. Instead, respondents implied that the culture of African Americans had caused them to be territorial, defensive, or critical.

Additionally, some respondents went further by attributing other perceived variables of African American communities to culture in an effort to support previous claims that African Americans’ lack of participation or concerns were due to culture. One respondent claimed that the African American families they worked with are “about ‘just give me!’” This respondent went on to assert that when they give an African American onions and kale from the garden, instead of helping, “they go – ‘you got anything else?’”. Some participants went even further to support their claims that the culture of people of Color is the cause of concerns regarding race and local foods systems work by citing concerns such as gun violence, the selling of drugs, and homelessness. One respondent, for example, when explaining why their program focuses on working with children 11-13, cited the “culture of this neighborhood” as reason for the challenges they had regarding participation:

“I mean, and that's just the culture of this neighborhood, unfortunately. So that's where, you know, my focus right now is to get these kids [ages] 11 to 13 because that's when they start getting into all that and their motivation is money, they want money... it seems like we've brought a generation of dependent, inept people and we want to find a way to enable them... We're moving towards that age group because they want the money, they need the money, and they don't have a way to get it and, unfortunately, in this neighborhood, if you're willing

to walk this bag of dope across the park, we'll give you money. And so we got to counter that somehow.”

In the above example, the respondent has clearly stated that the “culture of this neighborhood” has resulted in drug dealing and a generation of “dependent, inept people”. Through the above example, the respondent has not only suggested the culture of African Americans is to blame, but has simultaneously suggested their program will serve to “counter” the culture of African Americans – thereby privileging one’s own knowledge.

Choice or Personal Responsibility

Some respondents constructed whiteness by emphasizing the importance of people of Colors’ individual choice or responsibility over their own participation in local foods systems work. Respondents who constructed whiteness by suggesting the culture of people of Color is a problem for local foods systems work oftentimes also emphasized people of Colors’ choice or personal responsibility, or lack thereof, as a problem for local foods systems work. These respondents oftentimes emphasized that making the choice to participate or taking personal responsibility for their problems and concerns as a way that people of Color could mitigate respondents’ aforementioned assertions of culture as a problem.

One respondent, for example, expressed frustration that people did not want to participate in their garden program located in a predominantly African American neighborhood. This respondent went on to express frustration that people in the neighborhood did not want to work in the garden in exchange for food:

“I’m not a guy to candy coat stuff so, when you come and tell me you want okra and you don’t want to work for it, I don’t hesitate to just say get out of here. And that doesn’t go over well when you’re trying to do community stuff.”

In the above quote, the respondent has signified the importance of choice and responsibility by suggesting that people in the neighborhood should be willing to work for okra. This respondent, and all respondents utilizing this frame, fail to acknowledge structural racism or other hindrances that may prevent people of Color from “choosing” to participate in local foods systems work. Framing participation in local foods systems work in terms of choice or personal responsibility serves to place the responsibility for racial inequity in local foods systems work on people of Color themselves. Similarly, utilization of this frame suggests people of Color are responsible for resolving racial inequity themselves.

Further, utilizing the frame of choice or personal responsibility requires the failure to acknowledge sociopolitical institutions that exacerbate inequity in its many forms. As a result, utilization of this frame intersects with issues of race, socioeconomic status, ability, and more. As demonstrated in the above example, respondents sometimes expressed normative views regarding the necessity that people “work for it”. In this example, the respondent has not only failed to acknowledge structural racism and relevant hindrances that may prevent people of Color from “choosing” to participate, but has expressed an assumption that if people do not “work for it” they are otherwise undeserving of the food.

Similarly, some respondents expressed that they did not understand people of Colors’ assertions that they were unable to participate in local foods systems work, thus emphasizing that people should be able to simply choose to participate. One respondent, for example, expressed frustration that people were unwilling to grow their own food. She provided an example of a man she worked with who lives in public housing:

“So our guy that lives in the public housing, I have said to him ‘listen, there’s no reason you can’t grow your own food.’ ‘Oh, no, no, no, I got no room.’ I’m like ‘bologna, you don’t and

like no, let me just show you.’ And I don't know why everybody has such a blockage about this. Like, actually I will give you the seeds. I have like a cup or two of the organic sunflower seeds ready to go. I have instructions, they could come to a class and I would teach them or I'd just show them one-on-one and it's like ‘oh no, I can't do that.’ Well, all you got to do is like put them in there, put a little dirt on top, and then like water them for like a week. And then, they're going to be edible – like it's that easy... Like it's not even like, not even like a pet, you know, it's just like, this is less work than a dog. You just have to like put it in a window.”

The above respondent has quoted a man in public housing, signifying the respondent’s frustration that people have misconceptions about their capacity to grow their own food. In emphasizing the importance of choice and personal responsibility in local foods systems work, the respondent has failed to acknowledge the existence of institutional practices that could serve as barriers to participation – including racial, socioeconomic, ability, and other types of institutional barriers. Evoking frames that fail to acknowledge institutional inequity while emphasizing the importance of choice or personal responsibility are impactful because acknowledgement of the existence of institutional inequity is a precursor to participating in work that can address institutional inequity. In this case, local foods systems participants cannot address racial inequity if they fail to acknowledge its existence.

Contextualizing Demonstrated Whiteness

Given that all spaces are characterized by whiteness (Thomas, 2005), I sought to understand specifically how respondents constructed whiteness through the discourse of local foods systems spaces. By analyzing respondents’ discourses for constructions of whiteness, I have found that several frames characterize participants’ constructions of whiteness. These

frames include the aforementioned constructions of whiteness – choice or personal responsibility, culture as the problem, minimization of the importance of race, privileging one’s own knowledge, and cares about but is not responsible for people of color’s concerns.

The vast majority of utterances analyzed in this paper originated from respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color. However, utterances from two respondents who self-identify racially or ethnically as an identity that falls under the broader category of people of Color in the course of their interviews are analyzed. To protect the confidentiality of these individuals, these respondents’ references to their specific racial and/or ethnic identity have been removed and replaced with “people of Color”. I have analyzed how these respondents have constructed their perceptions of whiteness to contextualize the constructions of whiteness and its self-reported impacts on people of Color who are also active, engaged, key local foods systems participants. Overall, respondents who identified as people of Color constructed their perceptions of whiteness by referencing the same frames that respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color utilized in their constructions of whiteness. This is significant because the analyzed utterances of people of Color suggest that the utilized constructs of whiteness by those not identifying as people of Color have shaped local foods movement dominant discourse to the point of whiteness being a clearly recognizable aspect of local foods movement spaces and a consistently recognizable normative identity of local foods movement participants.

For example, respondents identifying as people of Color emphasized that local foods-related organizations oftentimes say they care about race and its impacts and implications for local foods systems work. However, respondents reported that these local foods organization tend to minimize the importance of taking concrete action or responsibility for such impacts and implications. Thus, when describing whiteness and its impacts on their work, respondents who

are people of Color drew upon the same frames actually demonstrated by respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color – in this case drawing upon the frame of cares about but is not responsible for people of Color’s concerns, and the minimization of the importance of race. For example, one respondent self-identifying as a person of Color expressed frustration regarding the lack of concrete action and intention in working with more people of Color – emphasizing that “saying everybody’s welcome’ is not enough:

The work in food systems is dominated by [people of Color] in all these groups...I am tired of being the only [person of Color] usually representing [people of Color] in these places ... So I feel like they feel like ‘oh, as long as we have a [person of Color] in here, we're good to go.’ And so ... and again, because I know that people individually, they are really good people and they really have the best intentions at heart. It's just like I don't see it. I feel like they feel their work is good enough to represent those communities. I don't see the time or money or resources as an issue... Because when you want to do things, you do them. You know, when you create a flyer, instead of just putting a white face, you intentionally look, you will go a Black and a Latino face. But if you don't think about that, you don't have that intention, you will always put white faces in the flyer saying everybody's welcome, you know.”

Further, as demonstrated above, the two respondents who identify as people of Color emphasized that white participants oftentimes believe “their work is good enough” without the participation of people of Color. One respondent who identifies as a person of Color went on to express frustration that white organizations would “parachute in” to a predominantly Black neighborhood, presuming to better understand the needs of the neighborhood and the nuances of their culture than the people living there, thus describing several frames of whiteness exhibited

by respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color, including culture as the problem and privileging one's own knowledge. This respondent also expressed frustration that white groups did not understand why African Americans in this neighborhood did not choose to participate:

“There are groups that may have a garden in the neighborhood and they have no attachment to that neighborhood. And where like there's a, there's a garden on a predominately African American neighborhood. It's led by a group of white people and they wonder why they don't, why they can't get the people from the neighborhood to embrace their project.”

Constructions of whiteness referenced by people of Color oftentimes reiterated concerns expressed by respondents who did not identify as people of Color regarding being considered a well-meaning white that participates in work that addresses racial inequity, but ultimately does more harm than good. As discussed above, one respondent not identifying as a person of Color, for example, expressed fear of being a “well-meaning white girl”, and this fear was later utilized as justification for not participating in work that addresses racial inequity. The two respondents identifying as people of Color described the well-meaning white in similar ways. This finding suggests that some respondents not identifying as people of Color have acknowledged concerns expressed by people of Color and racial inequity; they experience tension between a desire to participate in work that addresses racial inequity and their fears that such participation will be more harmful than helpful.

Respondents who identified as people of Color also communicated concern that white-led local foods systems work continuously failed to take steps to account for the needs of people of Color. Both expressed that they were taking steps to address these concerns. One respondent felt their concerns may not be addressed in white-dominated spaces, and thus was meeting in secret

with other local foods systems participants who identified as people of Color to strategically plan how they would address their concerns and “take over” white-dominated spaces:

“But there's a group of young, [people of Color] at urban ag who are tired of being in pictures on the covers and we're like working together to do a takeover... if our plans work in five years, we'll be the curve that everyone missed and it's cause they're not really checking for us. Like they don't really take us seriously, all right?”

As demonstrated, respondents who identified as people of Color generally described whiteness utilizing the same frames of whiteness utilized by respondents who did not identify as people of Color. To further contextualize the data, I have compared the frames of whiteness utilized by respondents in this data with the frames of whiteness and colorblind racism identified in Bonilla-Silva's (2015) landmark *Racisms Without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (2015).

Bonilla-Silva identifies that at least half of his interview respondents used each of four frames to construct whiteness, including abstract liberalism, minimization of racism, cultural racism, and the naturalization of racism. Bonilla-Silva goes on to explain that respondents oftentimes utilized more than one frame at a time to corroborate the use of the previous claim.

The frames in this data correspond with 3 of Bonilla-Silva's racial frames, including abstract liberalism (choice or personal responsibility), minimization of racism (minimization of the importance of race), and cultural racism (culture as the problem). However, respondents did not exhibit Bonilla-Silva's naturalization of racism frame, which is described by Bonilla-Silva as racist practices or outcomes that are justified by human nature. Further differentiating respondents in this data from Bonilla-Silva's general sample is that many respondents in this study acknowledged racial inequity and structural racism, but failed to take action and/or

responsibility for its implications via the utilization of the cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns frame – the most-utilized frame. Bonilla-Silva, in contrast, argues his data suggests that respondents typically utilized frames of whiteness to avoid acknowledgement of structural racism in its entirety. This raises several questions regarding this sample of active, engaged key local foods systems participants and how their constructions of whiteness may differ from constructions of whiteness identified in other populations.

Through this discourse analysis, I was able to identify several common frames that respondents utilized in constructing whiteness. Key to respondents' constructions of whiteness were the frames of cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns, privileging one's own knowledge, minimization of the importance of race, culture as the problem, and choice or personal responsibility. Respondents who identified as people of Color utilized similar frames when constructing their perceptions of whiteness, which exposed tensions between concerns expressed by those who did not identify as people of color of being a "well-meaning white" and concerns expressed by those identifying as people of Color of the negative impacts of "well-meaning whites". Overall, this data suggests that many respondents who did not identify as people of Color acknowledged the concerns of people of Color, but utilized various frames of whiteness – most often cares about but is not responsible for – to distance oneself from responsibility for racial inequity and its impacts. In the next chapter, I discuss how these frames of whiteness add to our understanding of whiteness and its constructions, implications, and my suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how normative whiteness manifests through the discourse of local foods movement participants. I started with the assumption that local foods movement participants construct, participate in, and/or react to discursive whiteness regardless of personal racial or ethnic identity. Critical race theory assumes that the totality of space is racialized (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Thus, disrupting inequality necessitates the naming and analyzing of frames utilized by individuals that maintain racialization within a particular sociopolitical space – in this case, whiteness, or ideologies and ways of being which maintain the white supremacy in local foods systems. By identifying and analyzing examples of discursive whiteness, scholars and activists can better recognize, value, and duplicate the subversion of whiteness. Through my discourse analysis of local foods systems participants' utterances, I identified and analyzed in detail several key frames of whiteness that were commonly utilized.

I reviewed the literature on discourse analysis, whiteness as discursive identity or a discursive construct, localism and local foods movements, and whiteness and color-blind racism in local foods systems. The literature suggests that local foods systems and their ideologies are situated as a possible solution to social injustices typically associated with the globalized agrifood system (Guthman, 2005). However, by equating the local with justice and equity, we fail to acknowledge that the local is oftentimes a site of inequality, hegemonic domination, and violence (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005).

Critical race theory notes that whiteness permeates all sociopolitical spaces, and the frames underpinning the construction of normative whiteness differ from space to space, and can be analyzed in individuals' discursive communication (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Naming and

analyzing the discursive frames that individuals draw upon which reify hegemonic power – in this case, whiteness as it maintains white supremacy – is critical to the disruption of inequality (Jenson, 2005). When individuals discursively utilize frames, they are performing normative expectations for what it means to be a particular type of person in a particular space – in this case, a local foods movement participant. This paper identifies several key frames of whiteness that comprise “what it means” to be a key local foods movement participant.

Based on this literature review, I then discussed my methodology for this paper ,including how I collected and analyzed data. I collected qualitative data collected via in-depth semi-structured interviews with active, engaged key local foods system participants. I utilized Gee’s (2005) method of discourse analysis to identify and analyze key frames of whiteness within the data. I then discuss and analyze the results of the discourse analysis in detail. Key to respondents’ constructions of whiteness were the frames of *cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors’ concerns, privileging one’s own knowledge, minimization of the importance of race, culture as the problem, and choice or personal responsibility*. Respondents who identified as people of Color utilized similar frames when constructing their perceptions of whiteness.

Implications

The vast majority of utterances analyzed in this paper originated from respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color. However, utterances from two respondents who did identify as people of Color in the course of their interviews were analyzed as well. Overall, respondents who identified as people of Color constructed their perceptions of whiteness by referencing the same frames that respondents who did not self-identify as people of Color utilized. This is significant because the analyzed utterances of people of Color suggest that the utilized constructs of whiteness by those not identifying as people of Color have shaped local

foods system dominant discourse to the point of whiteness as a clearly recognizable aspect of local foods system spaces and a consistently recognizable normative identity of local foods system participants. This finding is congruent with critical race theory's assertions that the totality of space is racialized, and that individuals' discourses can be analyzed for frames that support hegemonic racialization – in this case, whiteness and white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Given that many of the identified frames are complicit in the reification of whiteness, the local foods movement's ability to address racial inequity without first identifying and deconstructing these frames are limited. As Allen (2004) suggests, the local foods movement's ability to catalyze political transformation is hampered by its complicity with whiteness. However, the frames of whiteness identified in this data are not entirely congruent with the literature on whiteness as a whole – and perhaps provide us with leverage points and opportunities for the deconstruction of whiteness.

Differentiating the findings from this study and previous literature regarding whiteness is the frame of *cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns*. Whiteness scholars such as Bonilla-Silva, for example, assert that frames of whiteness are typically utilized in such a way as to deny the existence of structural racial inequity and its implications entirely (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Instead, respondents in this study oftentimes acknowledged structural racial inequity and its implications, but utilized frames of whiteness to distance themselves or their associated organizations from the responsibility of participating in work that addresses acknowledged racial inequity. This is significant, as it suggests that local foods systems participants are already questioning whiteness in local foods systems work – the first step to whiteness's disruption. Thus, one could conclude this sampling of key local foods systems

participants is perhaps more racially progressive than more general samples utilized in whiteness studies as a whole. I argue this finding suggests there may be significant opportunity for local foods movements to address inequities typically associated with the conventional agricultural system. However, further identification and deconstruction of whiteness must first take place.

Further, respondents who identified as people of Color utilized language drawing upon frames similar to *cares about but is not responsible for people of Colors' concerns* when constructing their perceptions of whiteness. As people of Color utilized this frame, tensions were exposed between concerns expressed by those who did not identify as people of color of being a “well-meaning white” and concerns expressed by those identifying as people of Color of the negative impacts of “well-meaning whites”. This finding suggests that some local foods movement participants wish to address racial inequity, but do not feel they have the knowledge, resources, or know-how to do so in a way that does not perpetuate further inequity. This finding further supports the claim that there may be significant opportunity for local foods movement to address inequities typically associated with the conventional agricultural system given that constructions of whiteness in this study tend to be more racially progressive than many of those identified in whiteness studies as a whole.

Overall, this data suggests that many respondents who did not identify as people of Color acknowledged the concerns of people of Color, but utilized various frames of whiteness – most often *cares about but is not responsible for the concerns of people of Color* – to distance oneself from responsibility for racial inequity and its impacts. Thus, this data provides several leverage points for local foods systems scholars and activists hoping to disrupt whiteness in local foods systems movements. Additional investigation could help identify how proponents might leverage these findings to continue the disruption of whiteness in local foods systems movements.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several key opportunities to expand on the findings of this study in order to further identify, analyze, and disrupt whiteness in local foods systems movements.

This discourse analysis utilized utterances contained within interview transcripts; however, verbal communication is only one component of Gee's (2005) definition of Discourse, which includes all indications of being a particular "type" of person in a particular "type" of space. To more completely analyze the ways in which whiteness is constructed in order to analyze and disrupt such whiteness, one might want to investigate how or if other components comprising discursive identity are constructed via frames of whiteness, including the body language of participants, movement communications and art, the clothing of participants, verbal cues such as intonations and interruptions, and more.

Though respondents' own constructions of whiteness are the focus of this discourse analysis, I provide an analysis of interview responses from one respondent who self-identifies as Black and one respondent who self-identifies as Latino in order to describe how these respondents construct their perceptions of whiteness and its impacts on their local foods systems work. I do this to contextualize the impacts of whiteness on people of Color in this study who are also active, engaged, key local foods systems participants. However, more investigation of the impact of whiteness as a dominant discourse on people of Color and how people of Color are subverting this discourse is needed.

I suggest that future research investigates the frames utilized by people of Color to subvert whiteness in local foods movements. The frame is the contextual backdrop that individuals draw upon when evoking a particular discourse; if the discourse utilized is recognizable, the individual has drawn upon existing discourse frames that are established

normative patterns of expectation. If the utterance is out of place so much that it is not recognizable, it is not a Discourse associated with that type of person (i.e., a working-class American). If, however, the evoked Discourse is different in some ways from an accepted Discourse frame but is still recognized, it can serve to change that particular collective Discourse, creating opportunities for Discourse disruption, subversion, and shift (Gee, 2005). By identifying and analyzing examples of subversion of whiteness, scholars and activists can better recognize, value, and duplicate subversion – which can lead to increased opportunity for the disruption of normative whiteness.

Applied Significance

The identified frames of whiteness provide a point of intervention for those interested in deconstructing white supremacy in local foods systems. For example, the identified frames of whiteness could be used as a starting point for training local foods systems participants on the identification of frames of whiteness in their own food systems work.

A significant finding of this research is that local foods system participants oftentimes acknowledged racial inequity – representing an opportunity for intervention given acknowledgement of racial inequity is a necessary precursor to participating in work that addresses racial inequity. Many participants distanced themselves from participation in work that addresses racial inequity due to fears of “doing it wrong”, all while respondents of Color expressed frustration regarding whites who are “doing it wrong”. By providing participants with a framework for recognizing whiteness in their own foods systems work, we can begin the process of disrupting normative whiteness, thus shifting local foods systems participants’ discourses – and ultimately – what it means to be a local foods systems participant.

Local foods systems are not an automatically-equitable alternative to conventional agriculture. As with all sociopolitical systems, local foods systems are not immune to racialization and white supremacy. However, the disruption of recognized discourses of whiteness within local foods systems spaces has transformative potential. Sociopolitical institutions which uphold inequality are in part reified through individuals' real-time discursive construction. By arming participants with tools to shift discourse while actively participating in the discursive construction of local foods system spaces, we can begin to disrupt normative whiteness a key component local foods systems.

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE INTRODOCTORY EMAIL

[Active, engaged, key food system participant],

My name is Ahna Kruzic; I am a graduate research assistant with the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Local Foods Team. I recently spoke with [key informant] about the [case study community] area local food system, and because you are a key player, [key informant] recommended I contact you to speak to your experiences in local foods work.

As part of my research, I am working to assess food system participants' access to and utilization of various community resources via one hour interviews. Because of the local foods work happening in [case study community], I'm interested in learning from food system participants like you. I will be in [case study community] talking to key participants the week of [date].

Out of findings from case study communities, including [case study community], a process will be developed detailing how communities might assess their own community's food system and readiness for development, as well as tools for mitigation and improvement strategies based on their community's assessment. There is a lot we can learn from your success in the [case study community] area food system; I'm looking forward to talking with you!

Would you be available for a one hour interview at a time and location that is convenient for you the week of [date]?

If so, please let me know of your general availability the week of [date], and I'll work to find a suitable time for us to meet.

Further, if there are others you work with who you feel are active, engaged key players in [case study community] and are a good fit for this study, I would be interested in hearing your recommendations.

Feel free to let me know of any questions you have. I am happy to jump on the phone to explain the project in further detail if needed.

Thank you in advance,

Ahna Kruzic
Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Local Foods

APPENDIX 2: VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study:

Enabling Environments for the Development of Local Food Systems

Investigator:

Ahna Kruzic, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Local Foods

Introduction:

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study conducted by Ahna Kruzic from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Local Foods at Iowa State University. The purpose of this study is to identify enabling environments for the development of local food systems and the narratives that characterize and/or enable individuals' participation in local foods work.

Description of Procedures:

Participation in this study consists of a semi-structured interview where you will be asked about your participation in the local food movement in [community] and [community]'s local food system. The interview for this study will require approximately one hour of your time.

Data from interviews will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your name and/or other identifying information will not be tied to your interview responses, and no individually or organizationally identifiable data will be presented in the final form of this study.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, your interview responses will be coded by ID number and your ID number will never be associated with your name in any of our records.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences.

You may skip any interview questions you do not wish to answer. Your choice of whether or not to participate will have no impact on you or your organization, and your decision and/or participation status will not be shared.

If you choose to participate, you will be required to verbally agree to this informed consent document that details the risks, benefits, and other details of this study.

Risks or Discomforts:

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study.

Benefits:

If you decide to participate in this study, there is no direct benefit to you. However, your participation in this study is valuable to the future of local food systems in [community] and across the country. Your responses can help communities work towards successful, resilient local food systems that are inclusive and economically and environmentally sustainable.

Consent and Authorization Provisions:

Your verbal agreement indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to comprehend the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Describe your community's local food system in general.
 - a. What characteristics of your community have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - b. What characteristics of your community have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
2. Describe your participation in your community's local food system
 - a. What motivates your participation in your community's local food system?
 - b. Why do you do the work you do?
3. Are there financial resources that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What financial resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
4. Are there financial resources that your community has had access to that has enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What financial resources characterizing your community have enabled local food system development overall?
5. Has lack of access to financial resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what financial resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
6. Has lack of your community's access to financial resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what financial resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
7. Are there political resources, such as access to the influencing of rules and laws that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What political resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
8. Are there political resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What financial resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
9. Has lack of access to political resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what political resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
10. Has lack of your community's access to political resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what political resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
11. Are there social resources, such as relational connections among people or connections to organizations that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What social resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?

12. Are there social resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What social resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
13. Has lack of access to social resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what social resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
14. Has lack of your community's access to social resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what social resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
15. Are there human resources, such as people and their abilities, work ethic, or knowledge that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What human resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
16. Are there human resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What human resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
17. Has lack of access to human resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what human resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
18. Has lack of your community's access to human resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what human resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
19. Are there cultural resources, such as value systems, diversity, or bilingualism that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What cultural resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
20. Are there cultural resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What cultural resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
21. Has lack of access to cultural resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what cultural resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
22. Has lack of your community's access to cultural resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what cultural resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
23. Are there natural resources, such as location-specific assets like a temperate climate, healthy soils, or energy that have enabled your participation in the local food system?

- a. If yes: What natural resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
- 24. Are there natural resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What natural resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
- 25. Has lack of access to natural resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what natural resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
- 26. Has lack of your community's access to natural resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what natural resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?
- 27. Are there built resources, such as infrastructure like quality roads, bike paths, or public transportation that have enabled your participation in the local food system?
 - a. If yes: What built resources have enabled your participation in the local food system?
- 28. Are there built resources your community has access to that have enabled local food system development within your community overall?
 - a. If yes: What built resources that your community has access to has enabled local food system development overall?
- 29. Has lack of access to built resources hindered your participation in your community's local food system?
 - a. If yes: Access to what built resources could support your participation in your community's local food system?
- 30. Has lack of your community's access to built resources hindered local food system development overall?
 - a. If yes: Community access to what built resources could enable local food system development within your community overall?

APPENDIX 4: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
University President's Residence
1118 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-1507
515-294-4568
IRB@iastate.edu

Date: 5/28/2015

To: Alina Krusic
103 Stanton Ave, Unit 38
Ames, IA 50014

CC: Dr. Craig Chase
209 Curtiss Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Enabling Environments for the Development of Local Food Systems

IRB ID: 15-287

Study Review Date: 5/28/2015

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
 - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
 - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**

- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of reviews is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4568 or IRB@iastate.edu.

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