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Agriculture and ideology in a globalized world: a multiplicity of farmer discourses

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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This dissertation is dedicated to my graduate student colleagues in the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, from whom I have learned immensely, and to whom I am very grateful; to my grandparents whose little farm in central Ohio fed my initial interest in rural places; and to Christopher Allen Thoms, my partner of unfailing strength and love, who inspires good work and brings me great joy. This dissertation is dedicated to my graduate student colleagues in the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, from whom I have learned immensely, and to whom I am very grateful; to my grandparents whose little farm in central Ohio fed my initial interest in rural places; and to Christopher Allen Thoms, my partner of unfailing strength and love, who inspires good work and brings me great joy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social scientists study agriculture from many angles. In recent years, changes in how trade and communications patterns have resulted in a burgeoning literature on globalization and agriculture, covering such topics as policies, economic effects, and possible futures. Concern about the demise of rural communities and cultures, especially in the global North, encouraged another line of research that examines rural development and quality of life, often in conjunction with agriculture (see, for example, Wilkensen 1991; and Flora and Flora 1993). In the global South, there are two major strands of research related to agriculture. First, there are many applied studies of rural development projects; and secondly, many studies examine issues of power at scales ranging from the family to the international (see, for example, Hamilton 2005; Escobar 1995) .

The research presented in this dissertation attempts to answer some broad questions about globalization and agriculture, specifically about globalization and farmers. Why do farmers choose to engage or not in changing international markets? Is there a difference among farmers in how they see issues of international trade and social justice? Why do farmers make the decisions they do about what kind of agriculture to be involved in? Does ideology play into these decisions? How do farmer organizations figure in these questions?

I have chosen an inductive approach to answer these questions. While some research compares various types of farmers on various characteristics, discussed below, there is not adequate research explicitly comparing and integrating data collected from farmers living and working in both the global North and South. The very premise that the increased interest in globalization is based on – that the distance between individuals at

any two points on the globe is metaphorically shorter today than it was a decade ago (Waters 2001) – exhorts us to examine that assumption through inquiry involving actors from geographically distant places and in diverse social and cultural contexts. Further, if globalization does bring these actors closer together, then research that examines “new” relationships is crucial for understanding the equally new global agricultural milieu.

With the above research questions, and a desire to begin to fill the empirical hole in comparative North-South studies of farmers, I have identified five groups of farmers from two countries who produce distinct products, engage in distinct lifestyles, and interact with the international market in particular ways. Two groups are from Iowa, an agricultural state in the Midwest United States. The other three are from Peru, a developing country on the west coast of South America, in the Andean region.

I have chosen to examine farmers’ discourse about these topics. Partly, this reflects my personal fascination with language in general, but also is a way to triangulate other studies of farmers and globalization that have relied on quantitative data, that have employed ethnographic data, or used other more common qualitative techniques. Discourse analysis is not the only technique that I might have used to examine these questions. However, I believe that it provides some unique insights that would not have been possible using other methods.

Why critical discourse analysis?

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is uniquely suited to inquiry about the *meaning* of what is happening in agricultural systems. Critical discourse analysis grew out of the “language turn” the social sciences have taken over the last decades, and focuses more explicitly than other varieties of discourse analysis on the construction and maintenance

of power relations through ideologically significant language (Fairclough 2001). Critical discourse analysis “begins with the issues” instead of the text, as some other language-based approaches might. CDA can help us examine “how language figures within social relations of power and domination; how language works ideologically; the negotiation of social and personal identities...it is critical in the sense that it is committed to progressive social change; it has an emancipatory ‘knowledge interest’” (Fairclough 2001:230).

‘The language turn’ in social science that began in the middle part of the 20th century is finally being felt full-scale in rural sociology and its associated sub-disciplines (Buttel 2001). Language is studied in rural and agricultural contexts by those with a structuralist bent, as well as those with a more interpretivist perspective. However, it is often not clear how these researchers imagine language and discourse relating to other social practices. The “so what?” of some discourse analysis in these areas is not often made explicit.

Social practice can be seen as a result of both social structure and individual agency. Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* helps to understand how the two come to weigh on a particular social practice, like discourse (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus refers to the relatively stable ways in which individuals view and interact with the world. It includes worldview, attitudes, strategies, and predilections for social action, and is a result of both an individual’s social position (e.g. her or his class, profession, or ethnicity) and personal experiences. Individuals with similar social positions demonstrate similar habitus. Giddens’ ‘knowledgeability’ can be viewed as one component of an individual’s habitus, and is discussed more thoroughly below.

Individuals and groups can mediate existing discourse, and create new discourse, for their own ends; the dominant discourse is often adopted by groups for whom it presents fundamental contradictions, and those individuals must either change the discourse, change their ideology, or suffer the consequences of identity crisis or suspension of disbelief.

What is discourse?

Usually, we understand “discourse” to mean an extended speech or verbal exchange, or conversation among people about a serious topic. In the context of this study, I am using discourse to refer to language as social practice. Gee and Hull (Gee and Hull 1996), among others, distinguish between the common understanding of discourse and discourse as social practice by writing them as *discourse* and *Discourse*; while I use the uncapitalized form, my use of the term is equivalent to Gee’s *Discourse*, language as structuring social practice. My conception of discourse draws primarily on two theorists’ definitions. First, the British political theorist David Howarth (2000) defines discourses as “concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution which involve[s] the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.” Paraphrasing Laclau, Howarth continues, “...discourses are contingent and historical constructions, which are always vulnerable to those political forces excluded in their production, as well as the dislocatory effects beyond their control.” (Howarth 2000:9).

Howarth’s focus on the political and power dimensions between groups is critical to understanding the significance of discourses about globalization and agriculture, and

indeed, about all of the most important ethical issues of today. However, Howarth adopts a very broad understanding of discourse, incorporating “all social practices, such that discourses and discursive practices are synonymous with social practice” (8). I acknowledge his and other theorists’ argument on this point: that most social practice depends on meaning, and that it is by way of symbols, ideology, and systems of thought (i.e. discourse) that meaning is made apparent, and therefore that all social practice has important categorical similarities.. But for my purposes, this would be too broad a categorization of discourse, as it disallows comparison and contrast between discourse and other social practices.

To define the boundaries of what constitutes discourse, I draw on Norman Fairclough’s (2001) definition of discourse as “*language as social practice*” (emphasis added). Language, then, becomes the limiting factor. Fairclough and most discourse theorists often include visual symbols in language, as well as verbal or written words. My definition of discourse, then, includes verbal language, written texts, and possibly visual representations of meaning, like advertisements, or murals. Dance, music, traffic flow, and fistfights are then *not* a part of my understanding of discourse, though they are indeed social practice, and would be included in Howarth’s definition.

Structuration and discourse

Anthony Giddens (1984) suggests that the appropriate subjects for social science inquiry are “social practices ordered across space and time”. While this includes most of the research questions that social scientists currently study, it emphasizes the context and especially the historicity of the social. A co-creative, dialectic relationship between discourse and social structure is central to critical discourse theory (Escobar 1995;

Fairclough 2001; Howarth 2000). However, for those not intimately familiar with the idea of social construction, co-creation can seem frustratingly mystical, begging the question of *how* this co-creation occurs. For further illumination, as well as fertile ground for social inquiry, we can turn to Giddens' theory of structuration and his contention that all social action is recursive and reflexive.

Giddens proposed the theory of structuration as a means of reconciling the roles of social structure and individual agency in the creation of society (Giddens 1984). Beginning in the late 1970's, Giddens criticized both structural-functionalists and neo-Marxist theorists for ignoring the transformative power of individual actions, and attributing social reality too much to an ahistorical and a-personal, almost teleological, social structure, portraying individuals as mere pawns to the structure, which is presented as a pre-existing truth. These theorists saw individual experience and subjectivity as, at best, beside the point.

Giddens was also critical of hermeneutic and interpretive social theories that emerged during the middle of the twentieth century, especially in Europe. While he lauded the inclusion of the individual identity and personal experience in social theory, he criticized the over-emphasis of subjectivity and the black-boxing of "nature" – his term for the context of social action or what other theorists might term "objective reality". Structuration demonstrates the relationship between social structure and agency.

Recursive and reflexive social practice

Social practice is "...continually recreated by [social actors] via the very means whereby they express themselves *as* actors," (Giddens 1984:2). Recursive is defined as "involving the repeated application of a function to its own values" (Encarta 2006). Initial

conditions are crucial to understand how individual actions will affect the social system – i.e. how structuration will occur. Context – ecological, political, cultural, and especially historical – is essential for understanding any particular social practice, including discourse. *Recursive* is derived from the same Latin root as is *resource*, and conceiving of resources as part of the starting conditions is one way to understand the importance of the recursive property of social practice. In fact, Giddens defines social structure as the rules and resources available for the production and reproduction of social practice. We can look at these resources as one piece of the initial conditions for an individual's discourse. In considering discourse as social practice we would look at existing discursive resources. What narratives, metaphors, grammatical structures, and ideologies are 'available' to an individual from which to form his or her discourse? And, as will be clear from the following discussion of power and hegemony, we will also ask, where do these discursive resources originate?

Discourse is reflexive as well as recursive. Reflexivity refers to the pattern of individuals' reflection on their changing world, and then their incorporation of new information and ideas into their future actions. "It is the specifically reflexive form of knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices," (Giddens 1984:3). Reflexivity applied to language can be as obvious and premeditated as a speech writer's revision of a politician's stump speech based on its initial reception, or a marketer's development of a product slogan based on input from focus groups composed of the target demographic. However, reflexivity in discourse is often much more subtle and diffuse.

Bounded knowledgeability, rational action and unintended consequences

Individual actors have limited “knowledgeability”, individuals take action based on *bounded knowledgeability*. Giddens describes three levels of knowledgeability – discursive, practical, and unconscious. “While competent actors can nearly always report discursively about their intentions in, and reasons for, acting as they do, they cannot necessarily do so of their motives.” (6) The first type of knowledgeability, discursive knowledgeability, refers to knowledge that actors are able to express through language. For example, I ask a farmer why she is a farmer and she tells me that she sees her farm as an extension of her former career as an environmental educator and enjoys helping people learn about sustainable food systems. This is a specific and straightforward response to my question. She is able to express her response quite clearly through language, giving us important insight into this individual’s motivations, values, and history.

The second kind of knowledgeability, practical knowledgeability, is that which individuals use “to go on with”, in Giddens’ terms, knowledge about appropriate social interaction and how to “get things done”. For example a farmer might know “intuitively” the signs that his boar is likely to resent a visiting researcher’s touch, without being able to precisely explain what clued him in.

Finally, the third kind of knowledgeability is unconscious knowledgeability, and is usually about motives, though most discourse analysts believe that discourse can tell us interesting things about motives, as well. At this point, it is important to distinguish Giddens’ use of the words *discourse* and *discursive* from my earlier definition of discourse as language as social practice. Though related, Giddens’ terms refer to

language in general, and his discursive knowledgeability seems to refer very explicitly to what individuals can express through language when asked a direct question about their action. Clearly, as Giddens acknowledges, the line between discursive and practical knowledgeability is a fuzzy one.

Knowledgeability allows actors to take conscious, rational, goal-oriented actions. "...[A]ctors – also routinely and for the most part without fuss – maintain a continuing 'theoretical understanding' of the grounds of their activity," (Giddens 1984:5), meaning that actors have a specific purpose for most of their actions; the theoretical understanding is the rationale for action. Weber identified "substantive" and "formal" rationality (Weber 1978), Habermas used the terms "instrumental" and "communicative" (Habermas 1987), and other researchers have discussed "environmental" and "moral" rationality (Vatn 2004) in an attempt to distinguish between various ideologies underlying goal-oriented action. The focus of these ideal types is generally in identifying decision-making with the end of personal economic gain from "altruistic" or "value-based" decision-making. One or another pair of these ideal types is often present in studies examining how farmers make decisions, and themes of commodification and increasing instrumental rationality in heretofore non-economic areas of social practice is a common theme among studies of globalization and agriculture.

The alternative Iowa farmers I interviewed very often invoked environmental ideologies as reasons for their choice of crops or production practices. Their rationality then would be substantive rather than formal, and some would further identify it as specifically environmental. However, if these farmers also received a premium for certified organic products, there may also be important instrumental goals at work. One

of the most interesting conclusions of my research is that farmers often, even usually, act according to multiple rationalities.

While people take most actions based on knowledge, and usually with particular goals in mind, knowledge, whether discursive, practical or unconscious, is bounded.

Individuals are simply not omniscient, and this truism has significant implications.

Actions have unintended consequences, and these unintended consequences are as likely as those that are intended to recursively affect social practice.

In general it is true that the further removed the consequences of an act are in time and space from the original context of the act, the less likely those consequences were intended by the perpetrator of the original act, the less likely those consequences are to be intentional – but this is, of course, influenced both by the scope of the knowledgeability that actors have and the power they are able to mobilize (Giddens 1984:11).

Unintended consequences can have quite significant, long-term effects, sometimes resulting in unintended, but no less significant, social impacts. When social actors then exercise agency and consciously reflect upon these unintended consequences, many of which have differential benefits for some social groups over others, the previously unintended can become intended, and entrenched, ideology, which brings us to the discussion of power.

Power, ideology, hegemony and discourse

Power is the ability to achieve objectives, those of an individual or of a group. It is both confining and enabling, and its use results in both intended and unintended

consequences. Power is not inherently about conflict, and is not a zero-sum game.

“Power is not necessarily linked with conflict in the sense of either division of interest or active struggle, and power is not inherently oppressive.” (Giddens 1984:257) Power is

simply the means to achieve outcomes, “power is not, as such, an obstacle to freedom and

emancipation but is their very medium...” (257). Though, as Giddens also reminds us, ignoring the potential for abuse of power is ill-advised. One of the interesting questions facing those interested in globalization is how can the extreme accumulation of power in the hands of individuals be used in a way that can promote social justice and environmental care.

Though in later work, Giddens’ emphasis on Third Way politics perhaps too much ignores the productive side of conflict in favor of sometimes artificial consensus, his basic premise that power can be used to enable or to constrain, and in fact any action has the dualistic nature of achieving both, is central to my analysis of farmer discourse. That his theoretical development of these ideas has shaped rhetoric and action in both politics and civil society is powerful testament to his own theorizing about the role of social theory in society. A reflexive society will certainly review and adopt, and adapt, social theory for general use within society, making even social theory a dualistic and reflexive endeavor, with both creative and constraining properties.

Ideology and power are intertwined in public discourse. As Fairclough points out, “it is perhaps helpful to make a broad distinction between the exercise of power through *coercion* of various sorts including physical violence, and the exercise of power through the manufacture of *consent* to or at least acquiescence towards it...Ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent,” (Fairclough, 2001: 3). Simply stated, if others share the way you look at the world – that is, share your ideology – they are more apt to agree to your using power in ways that might have an impact on them. Achieving this agreement on a grand scale is how hegemony is established.

Fairclough (2001) discusses the relationship between ideology, discourse and power by explaining that “ideologies are closely linked to power, because the nature of the ideological assumptions embedded in particular conventions, and so the nature of those conventions themselves, depends on the power relations which underlie those conventions; and because they are means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power...” (2). Further, since language requires that the speaker and listener (or writer and reader) share certain assumptions, power relations embodied in ideologies are often experienced as “commonsense” by the creators and targets of various discourses. “But despite its importance for language, the concept of ‘ideology’ has very rarely figured in discussions of language and power within linguistics...” (2).

Though Gramsci discussed power as purely a negative force in society (Gramsci 2001[1971]), a perspective one can forgive of someone writing from a prison cell in fascist Italy, his explanation of the dialectic process whereby actions of individuals result in the establishment of a common ideology and culture, which he terms hegemony, is quite a useful addition for understanding ideology and language in the context of Giddens’ overall structuration theory. The establishment of hegemony of a particular ideology requires the participation and consent of a significant proportion of individuals within a society, and, as Gramsci makes note, is not possible if only the elite, ruling class participates. Gramsci is apt to characterize the participation in establishing hegemony as more a result of false consciousness than of rational decision-making on the part of the non-elite. However, if we assume – as does Giddens - that power is not a zero-sum game and that individuals usually exercise agency and intention in their actions, then this allows for the possibility that less powerful groups may adopt hegemonic ideologies and

associated discourses for their own purposes, reflexively recombining those discursive resources in ways that have both intended and unintended consequences.

We might look to the current trade negotiations among the international community under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an example of how a less powerful group might choose to accept the hegemonic structure in hopes of achieving some of its own ends. Over the last decade, representatives from less developed countries have largely adopted the hegemonic discourse of free trade. Northern industrial countries have benefited from the initial effects of this globally hegemonic discourse through access to Southern markets for their manufactured goods, and this has clearly damaged some Southern industries. Now, Southern countries use free trade discourse to argue for more open agricultural and natural resource markets, so that they may have similar access to the Northern markets as the North has to Southern markets (Spero and Hart 2003).

By adopting the hegemonic discourse of free trade, Southern countries (or at least the political decision-makers in those countries) have in some ways sacrificed their interests, especially with the initial opening of their markets to foreign industrial goods. However, by so doing, they have also gained *entrée* to the logic of free trade, using that discourse and ideology as a resource to leverage changes in agricultural trade policy that they believe will benefit them. In this way, Southern countries have protected a certain amount of agency within a social and economic framework that clearly privileges Northern countries. This example illustrates both the advantages that the less powerful group can achieve using this strategy, but also the liabilities they face. There is risk inherent to participation in the hegemonic discourse, or other social structure.

This idea of the less powerful as co-conspirators in the development of hegemonic social structure contradicts Marxist understandings of hegemony, in which the powerful elite impose a social structure, through ideology, on the masses. The masses might suffer from false consciousness – a self-defeating identification with the elite, adoption of their ideology, and acceptance of existing social structure – or, perhaps with the aid of intellectuals, the masses might see how the social structure privileges the elite and seek to change the system wholesale, through revolution.

These two conceptions of hegemony are not mutually exclusive, however. We can easily imagine that in some cases the less powerful see a strategic advantage in adopting the dominant ideology, or at least the trappings thereof. We can also imagine that in some cases the less powerful are duped by overwhelming data, flashy advertising, or some other means into unquestioning adoption of the hegemonic structure. From my data, I have concluded that there are aspects of both processes occurring simultaneously for the farmers I worked with.

The example above, of the free trade negotiations between Northern and Southern countries, also illustrates how the development of a hegemonic discourse almost always has significant unintended consequences and that hegemony remains contested. When the WTO, and before it the GATT, began its global trade liberalization agenda, Northern countries did not expect to find themselves desiring the maintenance of protectionist agricultural policies when it came time to develop agricultural trade policies. The official U.S. policy under the last two administrations was to pursue the global elimination of agricultural production subsidies. These free trade policies resulted in backlash movements in many countries, including the United States. Having seen industrial

sectors suffering, and manufacturing jobs moving to places where labor is cheaper, there is great concern over the effect that free trade policies will have on the agricultural sector and on rural lifestyles (Spero and Hart 2003). Many groups in the North, concerned with the potential loss of agricultural markets and rural communities, have set themselves strongly against increasing liberalization in the agricultural sectors. This is one of the unintended consequences of the development of the free trade discourse hegemony and its associated policies.

Discourse and disarticulation

There are periods of hyper-reflexivity, when social change is rapid and people take actions with the intent of making sense of those changes. Globalization has been identified as the central recursive phenomena of our day (Luhmann 1997). In the specific example under consideration in this dissertation, farmers and others associated with agriculture are experiencing a growing disconnect between the hegemonic globalization discourse, which in part maintains that free trade policies will bring prosperity, and their personal experiences, which are more mixed. David Howarth describes the phenomenon of disarticulation between hegemonic discourse and individual identity and experience.

Disarticulation, or the de-centering “of the structure through social processes such as the extension of capitalist relations to new spheres of social life shatters already existing identities and interests and literally induces an identity crisis for the subject.” (Howarth 2000: 109). These disarticulations are “events that cannot be symbolized by an existent discursive order.” (111). The discursive space that opens with the metaphorical fracturing of the existent discourse allows the burgeoning of many different discursive strands. Under conditions of disarticulation and reflexivity, groups and individuals

combine discursive resources in new ways, with the intention of making sense of the new experience of globalization. However, as always, there are both intended and unintended consequences of these new discourses, with both positive and negative effects for the interests of the actors as well as other groups.

Agriculture and discourse analysis

Buttel (2001) identifies four primary and two secondary traditions in late 20th and early 21st century agrarian sociology. His primary categories are food regimes, agricultural commodity chain analyses, agri-food system regulationism, and actor-network approaches. He identifies the Wageningen School and cultural-turn traditions as secondary traditions in today's agrarian sociology. Discourse approaches fit into this cultural-turn tradition, which is described as a reaction to, and, in some cases, a rejection of, political economy approaches.

Of particular interest is how each of these traditions looks at power in the agri-food system. Interestingly, Buttel (2001) implies that Arturo Escobar and other discursive researchers in anthropology and geography pay too little attention to how power relations play out in the agri-food system. However, Escobar is explicitly grounded in a Foucaudian perspective, which views power relations as the primary subject of interest, and employs discourse analysis specifically in order to understand power dimensions between relevant players (Escobar 1996). The development-focused traditions of anthropology and geography have much to offer agrarian sociology by way of the finer-grained analysis of power relations they have been able to develop through use of discursive strategies.

Agriculture has been the focus of much sociological discourse analysis. Recently, agriculture and the environment has been a fruitful area of inquiry (DuPuis 1999; Glenna 1999; McHenry 1996). Interestingly, considering discourse analysis' post-structuralist leanings, structural issues surrounding agriculture have been the subjects for several discourse analyses (Liepins and Bradshaw 1999). This is an area where there may be room for important integrative work, incorporating the ground-breaking work that sociologists pursuing a political economy approach have accomplished with a perspective allowing for personal agency, and dialogue between actors.

Recently, the discourse surrounding organic agriculture has been an area of rich inquiry in discourse analysis (Campbell and Liepins 2001; Reed 2001). Contrasting consumer, farmer, and retailer discourses surrounding the meaning of "organic" and the values that it implies has offered insight into the way "organic" is deployed by various actors, and how power is distributed and challenged surrounding this rapidly changing area of agriculture.

The meaning of "rural" is one of the most developed themes subjected to discourse analysis related to food and agriculture studies (Halfacree 1995; Jones 1995). One of the areas of early inquiry within agrarian sociology was the difference between rural and urban – how rural areas are structured in ways that are very different than urban areas. In the 1990s, this line of study was developed through discourse analysis, revealing the contested nature of the concept *rural* and challenging the afore-accepted truisms about "rural" places.

The discourse of sustainable development has received quite a lot of attention from researchers. Some see it as a continuation of scientification, with its emphasis on

planning and management. Escobar argues that with the advent of sustainable development, “nature” has been transformed to “environment”, thereby losing independent agency and becoming a resource subject to human management (Escobar 1996). We can see the changing form of agriculture in the Midwest and in much of the rest of the world in similar context. “Farming” is being transformed to “production”, thereby losing its multi-functional character and becoming instead the manufacture of consumer goods (i.e. food and fiber). The parallels between nature-environment and farming-production are not coincidental, and are symptomatic of the same intrusion of capital onto, respectively, the natural world (resources) and human endeavor (labor).

Conflicting rationalities

Following Weber (Weber 1978), this scientification and capitalization of agriculture is also discussed in terms of varying rationalities. Varieties of rationality adopted by decision-makers and citizens have become important subjects for social scientists interested in agriculture and ecological values. For instance, Glenna (Glenna 1999) analyzed the 1985 Food Security Act, in terms of the debate's discourse as it relates to instrumental and communicative rationality. Following Habermas, Glenna adopts a neo-Marxian relative-autonomy view of the state, concluding that while for the most part the state acts in the interests of the capitalist class, non-instrumental rationalities can be heard in policy debates. However, he has stated that it is more likely that non-instrumentally rational arguments (i.e. ecologically rational, socialistically rational, etc.) will make an impact through non-agency institutions, rather than through the conventional policy process (Glenna 1999).

DuPuis (1999) questioned Glenna's broad conclusion that "the state" acts in a primarily instrumentally rational way, and suggested that perhaps different states or even different agencies within the United States federal government may be more open to communicatively or substantively rational arguments.

An earlier study looking specifically at the rationality adopted by Wisconsin farmers describes formal and substantive rationalities (Mooney 1988). Following Habermas (1987), Mooney describes the formally rational farmer who makes decisions about his farm based on economically rational criteria (equivalent to Glenna's instrumental rationality), contrasted to those that employ substantive rationality, focusing more on quality of life and social criteria (what would be a form of Glenna's communicative rationality).

Questions about scale, identity, and culture are crucial in discussing farmers' rationalities. There is some evidence that farmers typically identified as "alternative" in the United States and other Northern countries evince substantive rationalities in their production decision-making. For instance, Beus and Dunlap's (1991(Beus and Dunlap 1992; Beus and Dunlap 1994)) studies characterizing "alternative" versus "conventional" farmers' worldviews clearly demonstrate that there is a well-defined group of alternative farmers that act on ideology supporting various substantively rational positions (e.g. ecological values, community values, etc.).

Many discourses surrounding agriculture and globalization position farmers as objects of study, of change, or of development. Petrzeka's analysis of the adoption and use by local people of a scientific discourse about the Loess Hills in southwest Iowa is one of the few discourse analyses that addresses how the actor who was originally the object of a discourse might respond (Petrzeka 2004). The local people in the Loess Hills adopted the scientific discourse surrounding the designation of their home as a unique landform, and adapted the discourse so that it became something marketable to tourists, and also to a variety of state and national agencies.

Agriculture in Iowa

Within the United States, Iowa is the state with the highest proportion of land devoted to agriculture, with almost 90% of non-urbanized land planted to row crops, i.e. corn, soybeans, and small quantities of wheat and oats. Iowa is also the leading producer of pork and eggs in the United States, and probably the largest producer of animal feed (USDA 2002). The importance of big 'A' Agriculture in Iowa can hardly be overstated,

and it is arguable that in no other location, at least in the United States, is it so dominant a concept for a region's identity.

Like the seeming unmitigated flatness of Iowa's land, the statistics about big Agriculture, while impressive, smooth over a great deal of topography within – the variety of interests and players, and the relationships among them: interaction between farmers and the rest of the agricultural industry; among farmers, consumers and community; and the different values and worldviews espoused by different kinds of farmers -- to name just a few of the rills and valleys of this topography. Farmers make up about two percent of Iowa's workforce (USDA 2002), though this statistic is somewhat slippery, as farmers may also be employed off-farm or, as happens on innumerable farms, one person in a farm couple (usually, though not always, a woman), will be employed off-farm and still spend a great deal of time 'helping' on the farm, whether in the fields or taking care of accounting and other 'paperwork'.

Industrialization, expanding production, and scientization are the hallmarks of agricultural development in the American Midwest. Industrialization of agriculture in the United States began with mechanization, beginning in the 1830s, and was pursued in the Midwest in earnest during the labor shortage caused by the Civil War. Mechanization and the advent of the railroad led to the regionalization of agricultural production within the United States. It is during this period that the Corn Belt emerged as an identifiable entity. While corn was shipped to other areas of the U.S., or even exported, then, as now, the vast majority of production went to feed livestock in the region (Cochrane 1993).

Agricultural expansion, first by way of increasing land in agricultural production, and then in increasing productivity of that land through hybrid seed varieties along with

the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, has been a theme in American agriculture at least since the Civil War. After several bouts of overproduction, which led to crises of the rural people in the U.S., the federal government enacted legislation that created a kind of safety net for farmers, and also controlled production. The final component of agricultural modernization, scientization, is distinguished by three processes "...(1) the discovery of scientific relationships, (2) the development of new technologies based on those scientific relationships, and (3) the adoption of the new technologies on farms," (Cochrane 1993).

Farmers helped shape the development of U.S. agricultural policy. Farmers from different regions, producing different commodities, have vied for political power since the 1940s. Iowa farmers, traditionally producing corn and livestock, generally have endorsed a 'free trade' policy, a position that gained ground in Washington starting in the mid-1950s. This position is consistent with the ideology of increasing production, as well as with the instrumental goals of corn producers. Corn was historically fed on-farm to hogs. While the demand for grain is notoriously inelastic, the demand for meat is less so, and consumers have increased their pork consumption dramatically over the last fifty years, partly in response to increased incomes and to the breeding of leaner hogs and an advertising campaign to increase market share, but also in response to decreased pork prices.

Production controls on corn, which serve to control supply and stabilize or raise market price, then, did not provide the same benefit to corn producers as they did to wheat producers whose product went directly into those inelastic grain for food markets. Therefore, Iowa corn and pork producers advocated reduced supply controls almost since

the advent of U.S. farm programs. More corn meant cheaper feed, which meant cheaper pork, which meant selling more pork and increased farmer income. Then, in the 1970s, a failure of feed crops in the Soviet Union and China resulted in a new outlet for corn exports. This combination of a partly elastic market for pork and new international markets resulted in corn and pork producers, represented by the American Farm Bureau Federation, to successfully push for reductions in supply controls (Winder 2004).

Emergence of an alternative agriculture movement

A lot of the diversity in Iowa agriculture is found in the alternative agriculture movement. Viewing of the largest Iowa alternative farming organization's website in the state yields a wide array of activities farmers are engaged in that constitute alternative agriculture, with individual farmers or farm families often engaged in these practices side by side with more conventional practices. Alternative practices include: organic grain farming on thousand acre farms, five acre vegetable community supported agriculture operations, rotational grazing, integrated pest management, and the marketing of humanely raised pork (Iowa 2004).

The impetus toward alternative agriculture comes from many sources. Emerging markets for organic or local products may draw some people into becoming alternative farmers (Thompson 1998), and these markets certainly provide opportunities for alternative farmers to remain economically viable, but there is a great deal of evidence that most alternative farmers are also motivated by other concerns as well (for examples, see Fairweather 1999; Pfeffer 1992; Rickson, Saffigna, and Sanders 1999). Alternative agricultural practices are often adopted to preserve ecological integrity, maintain

community vitality, and provide a more rewarding personal experience (Abaidoo and Dickinson 2002; Bell 2004; Beus and Dunlap 1994; Curry 2002; Fairweather 1999).

As one might expect from these values, alternative farmers and their organizations are also engaged in the public discourse around these issues. Convincing conventional farmers and other people involved in agriculture is often an uphill battle, in part because the benefits of alternative, or sustainable, methods can take many years to become obvious (e.g. increased soil fertility and drought resistance, increased pollinator populations, less negative human health impacts from agricultural chemical exposure), while those of conventional agriculture (e.g. 'clean' fields, increased yield, reduced need for cultivation) are more immediately visible (Carolan 2006). However, the conflict between alternative and conventional perspectives also stems from the conflicting ideologies of the two groups. As we will see in the next chapter, the two groups of farmers are not arguing about the same things, resulting in talking past one another.

Cañete, Peru

I interviewed two groups of farmers from Cañete for this study. Though their identities and practices as farmers are quite distinct, their histories are intimately intertwined with each others', and the two groups examined together serve to capture much about the effects of the last half century's political and agrarian history of Peru on rural communities in the country. As I discovered in conducting the analysis of the data, understanding some of this history is critical for in turn understanding these two farmer groups' discourse regarding the very recent advent of contemporary 'globalization' and related phenomena.

The province of San Vicente de Cañete (usually shortened to Cañete) is located in the department of Lima, about two hours south of the city of Lima, the capital of Peru. The Rio Cañete flows through the department, from the high sierra toward the Pacific Ocean. Like the many other river valleys in coastal Peru, the Cañete Valley is filled with productive agricultural land. Paradoxically, the coastal zone of Peru is one of the driest deserts in the world, in some years recording literally no rainfall at all. Aridity notwithstanding, people have been growing food and fiber here for hundreds of years by virtue of extensive irrigation systems fed by the rivers that rush down from the Andes.

The river valleys along the coast of Peru are rich agricultural lands. Flat expanses of land, well-irrigated by systems of canals similar to those used thousands of years ago by pre-Incan civilizations on the same land, enrichment of the soil by native guano and fish-meal sources, and a mild climate all serve as the base of a valuable agricultural region (Hudson 1993). Today, agriculture still provides the basis of the province's economy, with about 60% of production devoted to cotton. Citrus, grapes, asparagus, other horticultural crops, maize and potatoes are also grown.

Social stratification in Cañete's farming community is complex, and fairly dramatic. The owners of the large farms, though now called *fundos* instead of *haciendas*, are still the most powerful and prestigious local players in agriculture. Mid-size landowners would follow, then the *parceleros* that I included in my study, followed by permanent agricultural workers, and finally, the temporary agricultural workers who are hired only during busy times of the year. Though there are certainly exceptions to the above ordering, the general social stratification is very similar to that described at the time of land reform by Cleaves and Scurrah (Cleaves and Scurrah 1980). Most farmers

in Cañete are men, though I did meet a few women with farm management responsibilities -- a couple as active small-scale farmers, one who assisted her father in running one of the large farms, and a few professionals who serve as consultants for agricultural organizations or the larger farmers.

Though the history of Peruvian agrarian reform is not the central subject of this dissertation, some of the effects of that movement of the 1960s and 1970s remain very important. Specifically, some of the *parcelero* farmers I interviewed indicated that they, as a group, were not good at organizing. They sometimes obliquely referenced production cooperatives that they told me the government disbanded, allocating parcels to the members (hence, the term *parceleros*) in the mid-80s because of poor management and farmers' inability to work together. During the interview, I assumed that farmers were referring to a very specific experience of a particular co-op in their community. However, the cooperatives they were talking about were those set up during the agrarian reform movement, the main legislation of which was enacted in 1969.

Similarly, when I talked with the large-scale export farmers in Cañete, they referenced their families' agricultural history. All but one of the large farmers interviewed for this study are sons of former hacienda owners. The haciendas, or *latifundios*, were broken up in 1969. On the coast of Peru, no one owner was allowed to retain more than 50 hectares of land. The remaining land -- sometimes hundreds of hectares -- was redistributed to groups of former hacienda workers, to be communally managed in the new land cooperatives. The former hacienda owners were paid for the land in government bonds; the cooperatives were to pay back the government over 10 years.

Predictably, this redistribution of land had profound implications for both the former hacienda owners and the new smallholders. Without any prompting, and indeed, without my, as the interviewer, having given much thought to the history of agrarian reform that was enacted over a generation ago, the farmers I interviewed in 2005 still referenced the time of land reform as a defining moment in the history of their farms, and of themselves as farmers.

Organization of the dissertation

I present the next three chapters of this dissertation in journal article format. The first, “Chapter 2: Rationality and the discourse of ‘why’ among conventional and alternative farmers in Iowa” presents data from interviews with conventional and alternative farmers in Iowa. I describe the distinct discourses of the two groups, and explore the interaction of the same. I also discuss implications for a move toward sustainable agriculture. The second article, “Chapter 3: Power matters: Farmer interaction with global trade discourse in Cañete, Peru” explores the interaction of historical context with hegemonic discourses of free trade and globalization. We find that indeed, political and economic power matter in how farmer discourse is formed. The final article, “Chapter 4: Farmer Organizations and Discourses of Empowerment” concludes that how farmer leaders interact with their organizations has important implications for developing discourses of empowerment, and therefore, on the ability of farmers to take action toward their own goals. Finally, the concluding chapter will attempt to draw together the underlying conclusions from this entire study, and explore ways of expanding upon this research in a way that advances our understanding of farmer discourse, as well as engaging farmers in future research in a way that is useful for them.

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Chapter 2: Should agriculture Feed the World or Save the World? Discourses in conflict

Introduction

There are two identifiable, cohesive logics of food production employed by farmers in the Midwestern United States. These particular discourses are associated with 1) conventional farmers and 2) alternative farmers. In this article I will describe the internal logic and underlying ideologies of these two discourses, analyze the origins and maintenance of these discourses, and speculate as to the implications this has for the sustainability of American agriculture.

Iowa, the setting of this study, is a pre-eminently agricultural place. Commodity agriculture reaches its modern heights in the Midwest United States. Iowa leads the United States in production of corn, soybeans, hogs, and eggs (USDA 2002). Record levels of production have been recorded for corn and soybeans in recent years, reflected in the low price of these commodities. Though the relative economic importance of farming is decreasing in Iowa, as it is in the United States as a whole, still almost a quarter of Iowa's jobs are related to agriculture (Schluter and Edmondson 2000). Concomitantly, land area devoted to crop and livestock production is also very high, resulting in a landscape dominated in the summer by fields of bright green corn stretching to the horizon, interspersed with low-growing darkersoybeans.

Although Iowa's economy and, even more so, its identity, is intimately tied to agriculture, many Iowa farm families barely break even, economically, on their farming enterprise (Kirschenmann and Duffy 2002). Increasing vertical and horizontal integration in commodity agriculture make it ever-more-difficult for medium sized farms

to survive. Even with high levels of government subsidies, farm families require off-farm employment to augment their income and maintain access to health insurance.

On the other hand, many alternative farmers – including those involved in small-scale, organic, or sustainable agriculture – are making a profit with small(er)-scale farming, often because of the price premiums they receive for organic or other provenance-related characteristics. The market for organic products is growing dramatically, more than doubling each year in the last decade. The market for local foods is also strong in Iowa, which has the largest number of farmers' markets per individual in the United States, a growing number of active Community Supported Agriculture farms (USDA 2002), and one of the oldest alternative agriculture organizations in the country (Bell 2004). Yet, even with these economic benefits and social support, not only do most Iowa farmers maintain their conventional practices, but in some ways the tension between conventional and alternative farmers and networks (including input industries, communities, and consumers) is getting more intense, perhaps leading to the concretization and polarization of these perspectives, rather than harmonization.

It is reasonable to wonder, given the possible economic benefits of transitioning toward alternative practices, why conventional farmers do not do so in the interest of increasing their economic viability. There are material explanations for farmers' hesitation to do so. Many conventional farmers are heavily invested in large-scale agriculture – in machinery, buildings, and land – making a transition to a different kind of agriculture very difficult, especially when so many farmers rely on credit to put in their crops.

Researchers also identify structural changes in the agricultural and food processing sectors that push the trend toward larger and larger production farms (Heffernan 2000; Kirschenmann 2003). Others point to the development of new technologies like transgenic crops that allow more uniform management across space, and therefore allow for larger machinery, which favors larger areas under production. Many researchers attribute these structural factors to the larger phenomenon of economic globalization, while others examine changes in rural values, identifying a reduction in community vitality and neighborliness as the source for the negative changes in rural Iowa.

All of these factors have explanatory power, but we are still left with the question as to what encourages most farmers to adopt these technologies (transgenic technology, etc.) and business practices (e.g. being involved in contract farming) that do not necessarily lead to long-term economic benefits, while their alternative counterparts choose other practices. In part this is a question that is central to much of sociological inquiry: what is the link between social structure (in this case, increasing integration and economic globalization) and individual or community agency? Further, if farmers are not making their decisions based purely on economic criteria (i.e. if they are not purely rational actors), what criteria do they use?

This study presents a discourse analysis of texts accumulated in interviews with conventional and alternative Iowa farmers. Open-ended questioning elicited statements from farmers about why agriculture is important for Iowa, what globalization means for farmers, and what the underlying purpose of agriculture is and should be, and why they do the things they do. The two groups' discourses coalesce around very different

ideological nuclei, a fact which in part explains the growing tension between these two positions .

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged as a marriage of mature critical theory and the ‘linguistic turn’ in social science. As such, it incorporates both an appreciation for the role of the structural aspects of power as well as that of individual meaning-making, and attempts to strike a balance between the two. CDA is also an inherently normative theoretical stance. As compared with other brands of discourse analysis, CDA emphasizes how discourse creates and reflects power relations, social inequality, and ideology (van Dijk 1993). Van Dijk calls CDA ‘sociopolitical discourse analysis’.

Discourse in this context refers to “language as social practice” (Fairclough 2001/: p. 18). This implies three corollaries: 1) language is a part of society, rather than merely a reflection thereof; 2) “language is a social process”, “socially-conditioned”(18-19). The language an individual chooses to use reflects not only that individual’s personal agency and meaning-making, but also the internalized social structures to which he or she is subject.

The creation and deployment of discourse at the personal level is similar to other social practice in that the individual is differentially conscious of the various motivating reasons for her action. Giddens (Giddens 1984) identifies three levels of *knowledgeability* of individuals involved in social action: 1) discursive¹, 2) practical, and 3) unconscious. Knowledgeability at the discursive level is the most apparent, that which

¹ Note that Giddens’ use of the word *discursive* is not directly related to the way that the word is used in CDA, nor as it is used in the rest of this article. Giddens uses the term to mean ‘expressed via language’, a meaning in line with non-specialist use of the term.

is most often tapped in attitude surveys and traditional qualitative research, and is that which an individual is able to give voice to his or herself. Practical knowledgeability includes the level of consciousness in which an individual ‘knows’ why he or she takes particular action, but can’t explain it in words; and unconscious knowledgeability includes underlying motivations for taking action. It is this knowledgeability that allows individuals agency, in discourse as in other social practices.

In studies employing the theoretical perspective of CDA, there are several fairly distinct methodological approaches that can be used. Most of these methodologies owe an intellectual debt to Foucault’s ‘geneological’ approach to deconstructing discourse (Foucault 1977). I rely on an analysis method described by Norman Fairclough. Following Fairclough, I follow a three-step process beginning with the description of the text, moving to an analysis of the content of the text, placing that analysis in social, political, and historical context (Fairclough 2001:91). Each of the bodies of texts (in this study, the body of interview transcripts from the conventional Iowa farmers and that of alternative Iowa farmers) is analyzed as a separate and whole unit, rather than treating each interview as an individual unit. Each discourse is best studied and described as its own unit, in at least as much as its totality as is accessible through available texts (in this case interview transcripts), rather than envisioning farmer discourse as an aggregate or a sort of linguistic median of independent interview data points.

Rationality in agriculture

Rationality is one of the means by which we make decisions and pursue goals. It is in part the answer to the ‘why’ questions about human behavior. Max Weber described two ideal types of rationality – formal and substantive. Formal rationality, Weber argues,

became dominant in western societies with the advent of capitalism. Formal rationality is based on the “quantitative calculation or accounting” applied to a decision, while the alternative form of rationality, substantive rationality, involves pursuit of ethical or moral ends (Weber 1978).

Mooney (1988) studied the way Wisconsin farmers made farm-related decisions, and found that he could sort farmers into two groups based on the way they made decisions – those who employed formal rationality versus those who relied on substantive rationality. Mooney describes the formally rational farmer as one who makes decisions about his farm based on economic and efficiency criteria, and contrasted to those that employ a substantive rationality, focusing more on quality of life and social criteria outcomes.

Since the early 1990s, environmental rationality has become an important area of inquiry in research looking at farmer decision-making. There is some evidence that farmers typically identified as “alternative” in the United States and other Northern countries favor substantive rationalities in their production decision-making. For example, Beus and Dunlap’s (1991) studies characterizing “alternative” versus “conventional” farmers’ worldviews clearly demonstrate that there is a well-defined group of alternative farmers that act on ideology supporting various substantively rational positions (e.g. ecological values, community values, etc.). Lyson and Guptil (Lyson and Guptil 2004) come to similar conclusions in their comparison of civic and commodity agriculture. These same studies conclude that conventional commodity agriculture is based on economic rationality, efficiency and production, while alternative or civic agriculture is largely based on a substantive rationality.

When we examine farmer discourse, however, we find that the substantive and economic concerns are not discrete and that farmer discourse entwines the two.

Conventional discourse and ideology requires both formal and substantive elements to maintain its internal integrity. Alternative discourse also integrates both formal and substantive elements, though, as would be predicted given Beus and Dunlaps's (Beus and Dunlap 1994) and Lyson and Guptil's (Lyson and Guptil 2004) findings, alternative discourse does make greater use of substantive elements.

Data collection and analysis methods

I interviewed leaders within two groups of Iowa farmers. In order to ensure that there was interaction among the individuals I interviewed within each group, I interviewed conventional farmer leaders from two adjacent central Iowa counties. I selected these two counties because they are the heart of corn production in the nation, representing perhaps the pinnacle of conventional American commodity agriculture and culture. According to the most recent U.S. agricultural census, these counties are some of the top-producing in the nation for corn, soybeans, and hogs. Ninety-five percent of the individuals that identified themselves as the primary operator in the county are men, and over 95% are white (USDA 2004).

To identify conventional farmer leader respondents I first asked county-level university extension staff to indicate farmer leaders within the county. After the first interview, I asked respondents to suggest additional leaders to whom I should speak. I included those individuals who were mentioned multiple times, and found almost complete overlap in the individuals suggested by respondents. Though there are literally hundreds of farmers working in these counties, the same four to six names were

mentioned consistently as the leaders in the area. This modified snow-ball technique (for a more detailed description of snow-ball technique, see Esterberg 2002) resulted in my interviewing farmers acknowledged as opinion leaders by other farmers, and who interact on a regular basis. In three interviews the interviewee's spouse was present in the room during the interview, and contributed occasional comments.

The five conventional farmer leaders and their families all produce corn and soybeans. One also raises beef, two raise hogs in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and one raises both beef and hogs, leaving just one producing only crops. All but one plant transgenic corn and soybeans. They farm between 1000 and 2500 acres, all of them renting the majority of the land they farm, mostly from extended family. Only the grain farmer relied extensively on off-farm employment for income, though one other operated a seasonal business from home, and all of the farmers' spouses had at least part-time off-farm employment. All of the conventional farmers, not all of whom are men, I interviewed grew up on a farm. I interviewed all of the conventional farmers in their homes, and during informal tours of their farms.

I identified alternative farmer respondents using a similar modified snow-ball technique, beginning by asking staff and board members in an Iowa alternative agriculture organization to identify leaders within alternative agriculture in Iowa. As with the conventional farmers, I then asked respondents to recommend other leaders among alternative farmers. Similar to the process in identifying conventional farmer respondents, there was overlap in recommendations about who to talk to among alternative farmers.

The four alternative farmers and one farm couple that I interviewed live in central and eastern Iowa, a wider geographic region than that for conventional farmers. This was necessary because 1) there are far fewer alternative farmers than conventional farmers in this region, and 2) the alternative agriculture community is organized through their organizations at the state rather than county level, unlike conventional farmers. In contrast with the conventional farmers, my inquiries about leaders yielded more women's names than men's. I interviewed three men and three women alternative farmers. Four of the six farmers I interviewed grew up on a farm.

The alternative farmers I interviewed farm between five and 110 acres. They grow a wide variety of crops and produce some livestock. All grow vegetables, one also grows seed corn, and the couple I interviewed raises horses and mules in addition to raising vegetables. Two rent out some of their land for conventional row-crop (i.e. corn and soybean) production. All of the alternative farmers use some mechanization, though a great deal less than their conventional counterparts. Three of the alternative farmers maintain extensive off-farm employment, three work only on-farm, and the spouse of one of the farmers with off-farm employment also works off-farm. I interviewed most alternative farmers in their homes and on tours of their farms, however I conducted one interview at a sustainable agriculture conference. I also spent time working on three of the alternative farms, in exchange for the time that the farmers took out of a busy summer. A similar offer made to conventional farmers was most often cause for a chuckle, as the expertise needed to assist in conventional agriculture would necessitate a great deal of training before I would have been of any use, rather than a hindrance, to the

conventional farmers. Also, most of my interviews were conducted in mid-summer, the height of the workload for vegetable farmers, but a relatively quiet time for grain farmers.

I began the interviews by asking the respondents to tell me about their farms. I followed with more specific questions about their farm operations, then asked why they were farmers. Then I asked about their ideas regarding ethical issues in agriculture and then about national and international agricultural policy. I ended all interviews asking if the respondents had any questions for me about the study or about anything else. To see the interview question guide, see Appendix I.

Interviews with both conventional and alternative farmers lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on how talkative the respondent was. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews, and then used the critical discourse analysis techniques outlined in Norman Fairclough's book Discourse and Power (Fairclough 2001), paying particular attention to issues of ideology and power illustrated by farmer discourse.

Two distinct discourses

In discussing the findings of this study, I begin this section with a summary of the defining production discourses of the two groups of farmers. This overview of the underlying logic, 'commonsense', and stories of each group will provide a basis to examine more specific issues, namely international trade and globalization, national agricultural policy, and environmental themes.

Conventional farmers invoked their core production discourse most strongly when asked about international trade and national agricultural policy. However, alternative farmers' core discourse was elicited by the questions 'why are you a farmer?', 'what's your favorite thing about being a farmer?' and 'what are the most important ethical

concerns in agriculture right now?'. While conventional farmers gave meaningful answers to these questions, each individual's answer was unique, and didn't lead to a cohesive discourse. On the other hand, when alternative farmers discussed trade and policy they focused on critiquing conventional perspectives. Although this discourse of opposition and alternativeness is a critical finding, these themes were not the central ones in eliciting a cohesive production discourse for alternative farmers. Unsurprisingly, the question, 'Why is the kind of agriculture you do important?' led to expressions of core discourse in both groups.

I will define the two production discourses in the following sections, identifying their essential components and their underlying logics. I will further identify organizations and other agents associated with these discourses, and examine underlying rationalities of the two discourses.

Conventional discourse: Feeding the world

We can identify the conventional discourse as the "Feed the World" discourse (FTW). To understand farmers' narratives about agricultural production, we need to unpack the ideology and assumptions that provide the basis for this discourse. The FTW discourse incorporates aspects of formal rationality, especially efficiency of agricultural production, with substantive rationality, especially the value of charity. The major characters in this discourse are farmers, scientists, businesses and corporations, and 'the United States'. Lesser characters include consumers, processors, and the faceless hungry of the developing world.

Six of the seven conventional farmers I interviewed integrated the two themes of trade and international aid for development when asked about either ‘international agricultural policy’ or ‘farmers in other countries’. For those of us most familiar with the U.S. context, this almost seems to be self-evident, a case of a blatantly leading question. However, when I asked the same questions of alternative farmers, or Peruvian farmers (my Peruvian research is presented in other articles), I received very different answers. In conventional discourse, the rationality associated with the international trade discourse is usually economic, and that associated with development is substantive, albeit the economic and substantive are tightly coupled in conventional discourse.

The Feed the World discourse as deployed by conventional farmers consists of two variations on a common plotline – the economic and the charitable. Of the two versions of FTW, the economic is the dominant plotline, and relies heavily on economic rationality. Its basis is the narrative that increased production is used to meet increasing demand, logically (though not always in reality) resulting in increased profit.

According to the economic line of reasoning, there is an ever-increasing demand for U.S. agricultural products. This drives scientific and technological investment and progress, which in turn leads to ever-increasing commodity production. Grain beyond that needed in the United States market (and there have been surpluses for half a century) is exported to foreign markets in order to take advantage of these growing markets. Exports are then used to feed the burgeoning global population, many of whom are the faceless poor of developing countries. The poor are fed by U.S. food exported through commercial channels, food aid from the United States, or through technology transfer from the United States universities and corporations.

The charitable version of the FTW discourse is essentially the same line of reasoning in reverse. According to the substantive FTW, there is a growing world population that *morally* requires that charitable people produce progressively more food on limited land, which in turn demands that technological progress be maintained. Exponential growth is the overwhelmingly common theme as the story proceeds in either direction – growth in population, food production, and technology, whether justified through economics or through moral values.

Respondent quotes can illustrate the central ideological elements of the FTW discourse. The first, and most critical, ideological element of FTW is the imperative for farmers in Iowa to produce as much as they are able. Invoking the economic version of FTW, a conventional farmer explained why Iowa farmers need to be involved in export agriculture:

Because we're only what? Five or ten percent of the population of the world? The population out there to feed our corn...we're growing food...We take sunshine and rain and fertilizer and we harvest grain that's used for feed and fiber and fuel and that's where our market is, in the rest of the world. (C1)²

'We' here refers to the population of the United States. To completely understand this quote, we have to appreciate the implicit contrast the speaker makes between Iowa and the rest of the world, based on another ideological assumption. Iowa (or the Midwest, or even the United States) is uniquely suited to produce grain in great quantities.³ The farmer tells us 'We take sunshine and rain and fertilizer and we harvest

² Throughout the article, I will designate respondents using these identifiers. In this case C1 is the first conventional respondent, A5 would indicate the fifth alternative respondent.

³ Conventional Iowa farmers are not alone in holding this assumption that their own region is uniquely and preeminently suited to agriculture. The alternative Iowa farmers I interviewed also discussed Iowa as a uniquely agricultural region. In related research, three different groups of Peruvian farmers, from two very

grain that's used for feed and fiber and fuel'. The construction 'sunshine and rain and fertilizer' emphasizes the abundance of resources available for agricultural production in Iowa, while the parallel construction 'feed and fiber and fuel' does the same for the resulting products. Contrasting the relatively small proportion of the world's population in the United States with the implied large proportion of agricultural production emphasizes the idea of comparative advantage, while reference to the rest of the world emphasizes the scale of the marketing opportunity.

The role of science and technology in FTW is illustrated by the following quote. Though addressing a specific issue that has emerged only since widespread adoption of transgenic seeds by Midwestern farmers, the following quote fittingly captures the current garb of the moral version of FTW. One of the conventional farmers I interviewed was frustrated that some African countries do not accept food aid grown from transgenic seed, as is most corn and soy grown in Iowa:

When they don't want genetically modified, and you talk to Norman Borlaug, and we've been genetically modifying things since time began. And because we saved the best seed, you know, we just found a faster way of doing it. And students have come over from Africa and India and they've studied and they've proven that they, you know, we can produce better. But yet there will be those who will say 'Oh, well, we can't have genetically modified'. Well, okay, rather let the people starve ... (C2)

All of the vital Feed the World components are present in this quote. Science and technology are present in the phrases 'genetically modified', 'Norman Borlaug', 'students' and 'studied'. Norman Borlaug, though he actually conducted most of his work at the University of Minnesota, is claimed as a native son by the conventional agricultural community of Iowa. Borlaug, known as the father of the Green Revolution,

different regions, expressed similar confidence in their own region's agricultural proclivities. These other groups did not, however, take this as confirmation that they were to produce *ad infinitum*.

lead the development of the technological package of hybrid seed varieties, fertilizers, and pesticides responsible for increased production of grain, especially wheat in Mexico. His name alone powerfully evokes the charitable variation of FTW, as his research and activism, spurred by concern that the world's human population would fast out-strip its food supply and that the poor of the world would be the most likely victims, were responsible for exporting Green Revolution technologies around the world.

‘[S]ince time began’ further normalizes technological progress, in this case, transgenic technology. Increased production is referenced, as are hungry people. The message is that because there are hungry people somewhere in the world, new technologies are morally necessary, and those that stand in the way are themselves morally culpable, choosing to ‘let the people starve’ rather than accept the normal, and necessary, genetic technologies. The farmer respondent does not give a reason for why one might oppose transgenic grain, and no reason would be sufficient because the result of such opposition is starvation of the poor. The underlying rationality expressed in this quote is quite clearly substantive, as opposed to economic version of FTW. Here, increasing production of grain through transgenic technologies is the right thing to do to ease human suffering.

The pervasiveness of the Feed the World discourse leads to the development of a kind of rationale about agriculture, a rationale that has far-reaching consequences. “[C]onventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere ‘common sense’ and contribute to sustaining existing power relations” (Fairclough 2001:64).

The FTW discourse is the dominant way in which the story of agriculture is told by conventional farmers. The rest of this article will examine more specific discourse themes – international trade and policy, national agricultural policy, large-scale livestock agriculture, and community. Interwoven with these matters, central to farmers’ present and future role in agriculture, is the Feed the World discourse.

Alternative discourse: Agriculture for community and ecological systems

The assumptions of FTW do not remain un-questioned by all farmers, however. Alternative farmer leaders, defining themselves in part by the conventional ideology and worldview they reject, offer a discourse different from, and in many ways directly opposed to, the conventional storyline. The underlying ideology expressed in alternative farmer discourse is very different from that of conventional farmers, but it exists in a discourse milieu dominated by the conventional. As a result, the alternative farmer discourse engages conventional, including, and even especially, FTW, in an explicitly subversive discourse. Finally, alternative discourse not only challenges the assumptions necessary to maintain the internal cohesion of conventional discourse, but also presents its own powerful stories about farming and agriculture.

I will label this story about agriculture “Agriculture for Community and Ecological Systems” (ACES). Although this is not as catchy a phrase as “Feed the World”, it captures the essence of alternative farmer leaders’ discourse. The primary characters in this story are farmers, community, and the natural world. These players are interrelated through material ecological flows, including of food, as well as through notions of community and care. As an exponentially growing world population is the

moral justification for agricultural production in the FTW discourse, so the disintegration of ecological systems and the dearth of healthy food are for alternative production.

One alternative farmer explained in answer to my question about why agriculture is important in Iowa:

Because I think it is the foundation of our community. I think within the food production, I think, is the core of taking care of the Earth and taking care of ourselves...I suppose it's a bit of mirroring, maybe, you know, the interconnection of the natural world, then the interconnection of the social-cultural communities. (A1)⁴

The concept of care is central in this excerpt, as is interconnection. 'Food production' results in the farmers', community's, and nature's well-being.

A different alternative farmer discussed why organic agriculture, in particular, is important:

We've got wetlands, and a pond, so I'm producing clean water here. And biodiversity, pollinators, and birds, and so really, I think the ecosystem benefit is a community benefit. They don't know it yet, the day is going to come when they're going to realize that there's something here that's helping them. Um, well and it brings us good food, and I produce uh community. The people who come here to get food feel like they have some ownership in this at some place... (A2)

We again see community and nature as central components of alternative discourse. The list of specific natural features – 'wetlands', 'pond', 'biodiversity', 'pollinators', and 'birds' – also invokes the specificity of this farmer's activity, the particular place and context that is farmed.

This farmer also mentions conventional farmers – 'they don't know it yet...' – and consumers – 'the people who come here'. The concept of nature as expressed here is

⁴ This respondent, like all of the alternative farmer respondents, made extensive use of hedging. 'I think', 'I suppose', and 'maybe' all serve to soften the speaker's statement of what remains a very strong ideology. This is one mark of an alternative, as opposed to hegemonic, discourse. Alternative discourse exists in a world dominated by conventional discourse.

largely ecological services, benefits to the [human] community, whereas in the first quote, ‘the Earth’ is something to care for separate from human concerns. This second quote also adds the notion of ‘good food’ to the alternative discourse, tightly linked to the notion of community. ‘Community’ is produced when people ‘come here to get food’. This quote also hints at the central role that place and context have in the alternative agriculture discourse. Alternative farmer discourse espouses strong substantively rational ideologies – especially through the values of environmental protection and community.

In addition to discourse about alternative agriculture and its purpose, alternative farmer leaders also employed a discourse of opposition. A quote from an alternative farmer asked about ethical issues in agriculture provides an illustration of this engagement with conventional discourse:

...I guess it goes back to the integrity of what the system is all about. What do we really want agriculture to do for us? Because that ought to be a basic foundational question that’s driving the practices and the policy makers, and while it might be on the minds on a number of the practitioners, okay, my neighbors and so forth, the policies are barring them from pursuing that. (A1)

The speaker indicates her opposition to conventional agriculture through her use of the phrases ‘really want’ and ‘ought’. She further implicates structural constraints that are impeding a different kind of agriculture, invoked by her mention of ‘policies’ that are ‘barring them from pursuing that [alternative strategies]’. The indication of structural constraints and her use of the word ‘neighbors’ instead of ‘conventional farmers’ or ‘those people’ illustrates the tension that I found throughout alternative discourse between being strongly critical of conventional agriculture, and in remaining on friendly

and respectful terms with those same farmers that are engaged in practices that alternative farmers oppose.

When asked about conventional farmers' FTW discourse, one alternative farmer responded in a way that captured the essence of the community component of the ACES discourse. He told me:

How much corn and soy goes to feed the world? I think it's a farce, personally. We should be feeding our communities. (A5)

This respondent was relatively new to farming, though the respondent's spouse is a fifth generation Iowa farmer. This respondent was the only alternative farmer who didn't employ significant softening or hedging discursive devices when answering questions about conventional farmer perspectives. However, the discursive overlay of criticism of conventional ideology and a preference for growing food for one's own community was echoed by all but one of the alternative farmers interviewed.

A quote from another alternative farmer illustrates alternative discourse about the international aspects of FTW. The farmer was explaining how it felt traveling in a developing country, during which the respondent was able to interact with peasant farmers:

...[Y]ou realize that things are much more complicated than just feeding people, it's not about just growing food, it's a matter of...having enough money to buy food, it's having land tenure – land title – so there's a lot of justice issues... (A3)

Complexity and interaction of the agri-food system is a very strong theme in alternative discourse, and is a direct counter to the conventional discourse that alternative farmers characterize as a simplistic understanding of agriculture.

This speaker also implicitly calls into question the main subject/object relationship in the FTW storyline, in which farmers or scientists of the developed world, especially of the United States, feed the people of the developing world. The above quote contrasts ‘feeding people’ and its implied subject, with ‘having enough money’ and ‘having land tenure’, the subject of which is the people of the developing world. The acted upon are transformed into the actors. Merely through strategic use of grammar, a central relationship in the Feed the World discourse is called into question, while maintaining the substantive rationality of FTW.

Oppositional discourses, like the alternative discourse described here, emerge as a result of discursive and ideological disarticulation (Howarth 2000; Laclau and Mouffe 1985). When personal experience no longer matches the hegemonic discourse, new discourses are created by the social groups experiencing the disarticulation, usually drawing on existing discursive elements, but integrating them in new ways. In the case of the alternative farmers interviewed, their personal experience of agriculture (either before or after their adoption of alternative production practices) does not align well with the conventional FTW discourse. Actively engaging the hegemonic discourse, as the core alternative discourse does, is an unambiguously political act, and the alternative discourse is understood thusly by both alternative and conventional farmers which explains the alternative farmers’ caution in engaging conventional farmers on these value questions.

International Trade and Policy

Having outlined the core discourses of conventional and alternative farmers, we can now examine discourse surrounding international trade and policy. International

trade and policy in agriculture is currently a very intense political topic around the world. The recently ended Doha Round trade talks of the World Trade Organization (WTO) failed to reach any agreement among the various factions as to how the world ought to proceed with agricultural trade. Especially thorny is the debate among delegates over the extent to which agriculture ought to be subsidized by national governments, and if, as in trade in industrial goods, agriculture ought to be subject to restrictions ensuring free trade (for various analyses see Clapp 2004 and Potter and Tilzey 2005).

Farmers in the United States receive quite large subsidies, especially those growing 'program crops', i.e. cotton, sugar, wheat, corn, and soy. The more powerful American farmers' organizations involved in the debate walk a thin line between advocating for access to markets – which requires that other countries reduce tariffs and other protectionist measures – and maintenance of their own subsidies. The free trade ideology exhumed from its early grave by the demand for access to markets fails to maintain its internal logic in the face of market-distorting subsidies. One way around this discursive inconsistency, favored by the EU, is to convert production subsidies to so called non-trade-distorting payments. The EU had already made a strong move toward these infamous 'green box' payments to farmers are for environmental and cultural services.

It is not clear how, or even if, the United States will resolve this policy issue. Adopting a European-style system would belie the FTW discourse in that farmers would no longer be rewarded for increasing production but rather for conservation or social benefits. However, this approach would also maintain the material economic benefits to farmers. Adopting a more fundamental free trade approach, and doing away with all, or

most, subsidies, production or otherwise, would maintain that ideology and discourse of free trade, but also both abandon the material support to farmers, and reject part of FTW by negating the argument that all incentives for increased food production are necessary and good. One way to get around rejecting FTW under this eventuality is to contend that U.S. farmers would be able to maintain and even increase production without subsidies, a discursively attractive option because it appeals further to ideologies of entrepreneurship and competition. The third possibility, that the United States policy will remain unchanged, is not completely implausible, though the expense of current subsidies may preclude this course of (non)action.

How do Iowa farmers engage this debate? As one might predict, conventional and alternative farmers respond very differently to questions about international policy and trade. Conventional farmers engaged more directly with the specifics of the WTO debate, at an international policy level. Alternative discourse focused on presenting agricultural production for local consumers as an alternative to international trade.

Who are we? Who are they? A marriage of FTW and Free Trade

Maintaining the integrity of the FTW storyline, especially the version based on substantive rationality, in the face of the discourse of free trade is a challenging prospect, and one that has significant political and practical consequences. Though some have attempted to build substantive rationality into the free trade discourse (“a rising tide raises all boats”, etc.), the discourse of free trade is more associated with that of profit and competition.

Tracing the characters and storyline in conventional farmer discourse regarding international trade, we can see an evolution in the FTW discourse in response to

discordant criticisms and potentialities. In the first quote I will discuss, FTW characters remain involved in the story, and reliance on the FTW characterization of the populations of less developed countries and the addition of a new character – corrupt governments of less developed countries – allows the FTW discourse to accommodate the fact that U.S. grain doesn't always help poor people. Then, using two more quotes, I will discuss the addition of competition and free trade to the FTW. Finally, I will present alternative farmers' discussion of these same issues.

Mass media news reports often present issues of international trade in terms of Country (Region) A versus Country (Region) B. This discourse convention creates a black box of sorts around each nation, ignoring the multiplicity of interests, positions, and identities that contribute to any nation's experience of international trade. We find a typical example of this in the following quote from a September 2006 Reuters news report. "The United States said on Thursday it could offer bigger cuts in farm subsidies to try to kick-start stalled world trade talks, but wanted the European Union to match it by increasing its offer on tariff cuts,"(Reuters 2006). While this quote is accurate reporting, capturing important aspects of the international trade situation, it ignores internal division *within*, in this case, the U.S. and EU.

In discussing actions taken by international players, conventional farmers portray themselves as aligned with the black-boxed 'United States', using the pronoun 'we' to describe the actor in international negotiations or policy-setting, in the following case, in donating food aid. "...[U]sually when we send food, give food, there are too many countries' governments [that] either sell it off or use it for political gain somehow..."ⁱ

‘We’ includes the U.S. government, hints at ‘we’ as food producing farmers, and ‘we’ is a good guy in this story. ‘We’ has a positive force in this quote, partly by virtue of being identified with the speaking self, as a result of being engaged in the generous giving of food, and also in contrast to the ‘countries’ governments’ who use the generously donated food for selfish political gain. The distinction of governments, rather than the afore-mentioned black-boxed nation, implicitly acknowledges the population of a country as separate from its government. It also casts the government as the powerful actor in these foreign countries, with the implied population being powerless in the face of the government’s corruption.

Here’s another typical use of ‘we’ and ‘they’ involving foreign countries in conventional farmers’ discourse. “So, I think as we more completely develop these other countries and they reach capacity in terms of agricultural production, I think a lot of those concerns will go away.” The speaker is addressing a question about the debate within the international community regarding subsidies in agriculture. Again, ‘we’ is the United States government, possibly a broader ‘we’ to include other industrialized countries – those capable of ‘developing these other countries’. ‘They’ are ‘these other countries’, the less developed countries that currently oppose U.S. and other industrialized nations’ subsidies of agriculture as a barrier to free trade under the aegis of the World Trade Organization. This is another simple plot. The good guys – the developed countries – are going to help the powerless victims – the less developed countries who currently oppose subsidies – to become more like the good guys by helping them ‘develop’ to ‘reach capacity’. The result will be increased production, which we remember from the discussion of the Feed the World discourse is a good thing.

However, this excerpt entangles FTW with the free trade discourse. As this farmer puts it later in the interview, there will be ‘an even playing field’ for competition. The speaker acknowledges the disparity in power between the nations involved in the debate, and determines a way to make the relationship ‘fair’. The phrase ‘reach capacity’ establishes that these other countries are at an abnormally low level of production, someplace below ‘capacity’. Though this acknowledges the arguments made by representatives of less developed countries that they require extra time and/or resources in order to engage in equitable free trade with nations who have been heavily subsidizing farmers for generations, it minimizes and dismisses them quickly by finishing with ‘these concerns will go away’.

This serves to justify the existing policy of the United States because the U.S. is at the more normal level of agricultural production. This farmer establishes that a certain level of equity, a substantively rational concern, has been reached before economic rationality is employed, he maintains the relevance of FTW, and integrates another powerful discourse, that of free trade.

Competition and markets

The FTW ideology depends on the existence of international markets for its maintenance, as American commodity production is far higher than could be consumed domestically, although the livestock industry and more recently the production of ethanol - has utilized some of the excess. Increasing production in Brazil and Argentina, especially in light of the WTO negotiations, has raised concerns about competition from other regions, especially in the production of soy. Conventional farmers maintain that, though they are concerned about this increasing pressure, the United States – remaining

black-boxed – can and will continue to dominate world markets. The creation of new markets was also a central theme when conventional farmers discussed international trade.

...I believe that the United States is still in a wonderful position, even if there is sort of cheap land and cheap labor in other areas, and so forth, we've got great soils, and super work ethic, eh, good technology, the mechanical engineering know-how, the agronomic advancements that we've made over the last few years. I think we have lots of advantages that we can compete in any market. (C5)

This quote, preceded by a discussion of the importance of U.S. agriculture for producing food, energy crops, and environmental services, presents a list of characteristics that will allow U.S. farmers to compete with new competitors, even though these competitors may have the advantage of cheaper land and labor. 'Great soils' is a recurring theme in Iowa agricultural discourse, of any stripe. Iowa is said to have the best soils in the world, especially suited to corn production. Setting Iowa soils up as uniquely productive further necessitates taking advantage of their productivity in the FTW story, as food production is clearly their highest and best use.

'Super work ethic' is a substantive characteristic, often associated with agricultural or rural communities. This theme came up several times in my interviews with conventional farmers, especially as regards raising children on the farm – farming was described as fostering a work ethic in children. 'Good technology' is a general invocation of the agricultural science and technology infrastructure, while 'mechanical engineering know-how' more specifically references development of agricultural machinery and 'agronomic advancements' references hybrid and transgenic developments. That these advances occurred in the 'last few years' emphasizes the need

for continual technological progress, aligning with the exponential growth themes of FTW. Though partly acknowledging the characteristics of Brazilian and Argentinian production that make these areas growing competitors with American commodities – ‘cheap land and cheap labor’ – the emphasis remained on the Midwest as uniquely suited to commodity production. This farmer’s discourse unmistakably moves us toward a discourse of free trade aligned with FTW, the emphasis on the unique characteristics of the Midwest and entire United States agriculture establishing that U.S. farmers will continue to be “the most productive in the world” even in the face of competition.

In addition to discussing new competitors, conventional farmers also talked about new markets for corn and soy. Conventional farmers linked their discussion of new markets with humanitarian (variations on the moral FTW story) and environmental (renewable energy) themes. The following excerpt was taken from an interview with a conventional farmer who has been involved in leadership positions in some of the commodity groups – organizations made up of farmers who produce specific crops, in Iowa the most important groups are those representing corn, soy, and pork producers. The commodity groups are involved in lobbying efforts as well as activities promoting their specific commodities. The farmer described a particular initiative:

Another thing I’ve been involved with on the international marketing side is ...called the World Initiative in Soy for Human Health. This is a humanitarian effort that we as producers started to get textured soy protein, soy isolates, soy milk to the human population of the world that are literally starving to death from the HIV AIDS epidemic in Africa...[W]e can take some of our soy protein and get to the needy people of the world. Donations programs through...government agencies such as USAID and private volunteer organizations such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran Social Services...instead of going through a government...There are about a dozen countries in Africa, plus several countries in Latin America in that program. And all this utilizes

check-off dollars and matching dollars⁵ that we actually lobby for under the Farm Bill. (C4)

First, let us note the overlap of economic and substantive (in this case, charitable) rationality in this quote. The farmer begins by identifying this program as an ‘international marketing’ effort, and then further characterizes the same program as ‘humanitarian’. If we remember the first quote presented on page 9, which criticizes the opponents of transgenic grain, we can see a connection to the same issue.

Several African nations have refused to accept transgenic soy, and have been supported in international negotiations on this point by the EU. The WISHH program described by this farmer is an effort to introduce African nations to transgenic soy, with the hope that this introduction will lead to the later acceptance of the product for both donated food aid and regular imported grain, which would likely be sold as livestock feed.

The speaker acknowledged this context in his identification of this program as a marketing initiative, there was no attempt to hide the economic motivations of the program. However, the emphasis in his description is on the substantive motivations, and on the substantive version of FTW. ‘Needy people of the world’ who are ‘literally starving to death’ illustrates the necessity of programs like this one. The names of the non-profit partners, ‘World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran Social Services’, both reinforce the charitable and substantive nature of the program, and also make a statement about the governments of the recipient nations. Like the earlier quote from a different farmer about ‘too many countries’ governments’ diverting food aid, by setting

⁵ Check off dollars are funds generated by the sale of particular commodities, which go to the commodity groups to use in their marketing efforts. The mandatory nature of these check-off programs is determined by national legislation, i.e. the Farm Bill.

the charitable non-profits up in contrast to governments – ‘instead of going through governments’ – this excerpt makes the case for governments being untrustworthy and inefficient, and certainly not serving the ‘needy people of the world’. It is also worth noting that the U.S. government is not included in this assessment of governments, as USAID is portrayed as one of the good guys.

Finally, in this quote there is a strong emphasis on farmers themselves as the good guys in the FTW story. ‘We as producers’ and ‘we actually lobby for’ emphasize that it is farmers who have chosen to pursue this particular program. The implication is that they didn’t have to, that there were alternative courses of action that would not have been as substantively laudable as the WISHH program. We begin to see that, given the FTW story, the economic cannot be separated from the substantive rationality in conventional discourse, the loss of one neutralizes the power of the other.

Alternative interpretations

Alternative farmer discourse relies on an economic rationality that emphasizes family-scale livelihoods and economics, rather than industry or national-level economics of the conventional discourse, and a substantive rationality of justice rather than charity. The alternative farmers in this study produce for local or regional consumption. Unlike conventional farmers, their material interests are not directly tied to the rise or fall of international grain markets. When discussing international trade and policy, alternative farmers emphasize the effects of trade and policy on the other countries. As she was describing how industrial food systems are based on ‘faulty assumptions’, one farmer said:

...[B]ecause that export, you know, it's driving that same set of assumptions in those other countries. It's not empowering those other countries to build up their own food systems, it's moving us and anchoring us in what I would say is a failed farm system, so and it's really hard to discern what to move toward and how to get there. (A1)

Notice the use of 'us' in this quote. Rather than the 'we' associated with the United States and other developed country governments, this farmer identifies with a global we, including 'those other countries'. '[E]mpowering those other countries' is a strong phrase. First, the use of the word 'empower', which came up in at least three interviews with alternative farmers and none with conventional farmers, links this farmer to a formal discourse of social justice advocacy and inquiry. Along with 'their own', it also directly contradicts the object role into which 'those other countries' are placed in FTW. Though partly softened by 'what I would say', 'anchoring us' in a 'failed farm system' is a strong indictment against conventional discourse and ideology. It also challenges the exponential change component of FTW, with 'anchoring' implying stagnation. Finally, the discussion of 'assumptions' serves to portray those who follow the conventional ideology as ignorant or unaware rather than malevolent, a common theme throughout alternative discourse about conventional farmers, and one that I will explore in more detail later in this analysis.

Even though alternative discourse often shields individual conventional farmers from moral culpability due to ignorance, there is still a strong current of reproach in alternative discourse regarding international trade. An alternative farmer reflected on technology transfer in agriculture:

Well, and you can ask the basic question again of what do we want agriculture to do for us, and what's an appropriate way to do that? You

know, we didn't ask that question because we just figured that, you know, the U.S. has a food system figured out, and it's very productive, in some definitions, and therefore that's what you need. It's very egocentric. (A1)

'[W]hat's an appropriate way' implies that the current, conventional way is inappropriate, and 'egocentric' clearly accuses this perspective of selfishness. Given FTW's emphasis on charity, the charge of selfishness is especially pointed, more so than the above critique based on equity. This critique of cookie-cutter approaches to problem-solving in agricultural policy and practice is another recurring theme in alternative discourse.

A third alternative farmer responded to questions about international trade by saying:

Fair trade is important, farmers in other countries are getting the shaft, they can't make a living. (A5)

The respondent followed this statement with some discussion of African countries refusing to accept transgenic food aid. Then the respondent's spouse added

Global economic politics are out of control. They're driven by a suspect ideology. I think the brick wall we're going to hit is environmental. We *have* hit some brick walls of human suffering...[emphasis in original] (A4)

Rationality, gender and identity

The tension between economic and substantive rationality in conventional farmer discourse is quite apparent. Some authors have attributed the emphasis on economic rationality by farmers as a result of dominant ideas about masculinity (see for example Bell 2004; Saugeres 2002). The competition implied by economic rationality, at least the

modern capitalistic version thereof, tightly parallels traditional discourses of masculinity, in which ‘winning’ and ‘victory’ are held to be the pinnacle of manhood.

I asked a conventional farmer, a man, what his favorite aspect of being a farmer is. He told me:

...[A] lot of people you hear about, it's [i.e. farming has] lost a lot of the fun it used to have, but I don't think so. I think it's still fun. You get to play with big equipment and lots of money and you hopefully slow some down as it goes by. But I don't have...my opinion is my own, and I don't have to care if it's going to piss somebody off. It's just... you know? They don't have to like me to do business with me. (C3)

First, by contrasting himself to other farmers who claim that farming is not as fun as it used to be, the speaker is accomplishing a plethora of identity-establishing feats, some of which emphasize a traditional masculinity. The people he is referencing, which could perhaps be inferred here but also comes out later in the interview, are farmers who are disappointed with changes in the structure of agriculture that have resulted in larger farms, fewer farmers, and the requirement of a great deal of capital to establish a farm.

I have been told many times by conventional farmers, or those who have lost their farms, that farming is not as fun as it used to be. This is often in the context of livestock farming, in which technological changes have reduced the need to interact as closely with individual animals, an activity that some farmers miss. Sometimes, it is in reference to the need to farm so much land that there is not time to be involved in some of the activities that these farmers valued about farming – from simply having more opportunity to be in physical contact with the soil, crops, and livestock, to having time to be involved in rural community activities.

By rejecting this perspective, the farmer quoted above effectively endorses these changes in farming. By actively embracing the changes that have discouraged these other farmers - 'I think it's still fun.' – he demonstrates his superiority and fitness, in a social Darwinian sense. He further clarifies his victory by emphasizing that he has access to the fun of 'big equipment' and 'lots of money'. The self-deprecating 'hopefully slow some down as it goes by' does little to erase the image he has created.

'Big equipment', 'lots of money', 'don't have to care', 'don't have to like me' and 'do business' all bring to mind the image of a powerful, wealthy and independent man. Try to read the above quote as though a woman said it. The references to 'big equipment' and 'lots of money' may give pause, but 'don't have to care', 'piss somebody off', and 'don't have to like me' would trigger a gender red flag. This is not a discourse that fits the conventional relational discourse of femininity, on the farm or off. However, it does quite easily intersect the conventional FTW discourse, and a discourse that evokes the image of the masculine independent entrepreneur, as much if not more American than feminine apple-pie.

This is not to say that conventional farmers are sexist. Some no doubt are, as are some alternative farmers (again, see Bell 2004), but nothing in my interview data suggests anything about overtly sexist actions or attitudes on the part of these particular farmers. The essential point is that gender is a critical, even primary, aspect of personal identity, and that any ideology and its discourse that aligns so closely to those of gender has the potential to illicit comparably visceral attachment. In the case of agriculture, this union between gender and FTW further entrenches conventional agricultural ideologies, discourses, and logic. It is to be expected then, that questioning of FTW is perceived by

both women and men involved in conventional agriculture as a questioning of their identity, a deeply unsettling eventuality.

Conclusion

Conventional and alternative farmer discourse differs dramatically regarding international trade/globalization and production subsidies, demonstrating in part how significant are the ideological underpinnings of farmer decision-making. Throughout this discussion, I have identified cause and effect relationships within farmer discourse, as well as identifying values associated with various aspects of the above themes. Both formal and substantive rationality are apparent within both the conventional Feed the World discourse and the alternative Agriculture for Community and Ecological Systems discourse. Each of these discourses maintains its internal consistency, though the specific values espoused differ greatly.

Conventional discourse relies heavily on formal rationality, especially emphasizing efficiency and production. These aspects of formal rationality are married to substantively rational values, especially the value of charity. In the Midwest, helping poor people, especially hungry people, is firmly part of doing what's right.

Alternative discourse also relies on both formal and substantive rationalities. However, within formal rationality, instead of an emphasis on efficiency and production, alternative discourse emphasizes income and livelihood stability. The dominant substantive values expressed in alternative discourse were communitarian and ecological.

Within the interviews that comprised the data analyzed in this study, both conventional and alternative farmers discussed many more themes than are presented in

the above analysis. For example, conventional farmers discussed extended family and land prices at great length, while alternative farmers spoke a great deal more about non-agricultural political themes and their organizations than I presented here. What my analysis attempts to present is the core discourse describing the *why's* of Midwest agricultural production, according to these two very different groups. These core discourses are extremely powerful for both groups, integrated as they are with ideologies about identity and meaning. As I hope I have demonstrated, the two core discourses are also very different. There is little overlap in the underlying rationality, the reasons for agriculture's very existence, in the two groups' discourse.

However, within both groups there is a discourse of formal and substantive rationality. Nothing in my data suggests that we can divide conventional and alternative farmers by indicating one group adheres more to an ideology of formal, and the other more to substantive, rationality. Though an analysis of discourse does not tell us directly how farmers "really" make decisions, it does point to underlying values and attitudes.

To more completely understand the role that agricultural discourse plays in shaping material conditions and personal decisions made by farmers, more research is needed as to how individuals internalize institutionally and organizationally based discourse as well as how, specifically, discourse correlates with on-the-ground practices. Although these questions are beyond the scope of this particular study, future research more thoroughly investigating these linkages will be critical for furthering our understanding of the importance of agricultural discourse.

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Chapter 4: New markets, old struggles:

Power and opportunity in export agriculture in coastal Peru

Introduction

Farmers in many parts of the global South are experiencing tumultuous change in critical structural relationships as a result of economic globalization. These include changes in international markets, state regulatory environments, and communications. Ideologies and discourse associated with liberalization and globalization have emerged in these areas as a result of both endogenous and exogenous development. In Cañete, Peru these events meet a social and political milieu already in a state of relative unrest, a result of land reform occurring a generation ago and a civil conflict only receding in 1995.

Over the last decade, Peru increased its production of horticultural crops destined for export, especially in the coastal zone. Ostensibly transformation of the region's cropping system was necessary because of a loss of markets for traditional export crops, especially cotton and sugar. Though the Peruvian government decreased its investment in agricultural research and market development nearly completely, external agents such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have invested heavily in developing markets for Peruvian horticultural products.

This article is interested in the 1) changing nature of agriculture and trade for Peruvian farmers, 2) the power relationships that affect farmers' ability to effectively prosper in this new economic environment, and 3) the implications that these new economic conditions and farmers' roles have for ecological and social sustainability of agriculture in the region. This study examines the discourse of two groups of farmers at the center of this transformation of the coastal agricultural system. Both groups of

farmers live in Cañete, Peru, and are associated with a formal agricultural organization. The origin of these two groups is rooted in the history of Peruvian Land Reform. First is a group of larger-scale farmers, whose crops are nearly all produced for export markets. These farmers are the sons of former hacienda owners, who tend to be much wealthier and better educated than most people in this region. They are identified as leaders within the entire community, and especially among the farming population.

The second group of farmers is of very small-scale producers who produce mostly for market. They recently integrated horticultural products destined for export into their production, augmenting their traditional crops of maize, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. These farmers and their parents were workers on the haciendas owned by the first group's families before land reform in 1969. This second group tends to be significantly less wealthy than the first group, though they are among the middle or upper-middle class of the region as a whole.

A critical analysis of the discourse of these groups of farmers in Cañete reveals important power differentials between the two groups, as well as between each group and other institutions. Each group also integrates aspects of the hegemonic globalization and development discourses into its own discourse, at the same time layering other, national and local level discursive elements with these more global components. Dramatic differences between each group's self-positioning as subject or object within their own discourse further illustrates the relative (in)ability of these farmers to engage effectively with their changing agricultural markets. Placing farmer discourse within the context of the area's recent history, recent economic changes, and the current political climate serves to link the micro-scale farmer discourse with larger regional and global

phenomena. Finally, this analysis identifies both challenges and opportunities for social justice and ecological sustainability in Cañete's agriculture.

Peru and international agricultural trade

Worldwide, agricultural exports have increased dramatically over the last decade, especially of products from the global South [Busch and Bain 2004]. International trade in horticultural products has increased especially quickly, with South American countries increasing exports of specialty crops [Karsenty 2007], while Peruvian exports of particular fruit and vegetable products have increased as much as eight times in the last ten years [Foreign Agricultural Service 2007]. This increase is due to both international economic and political trends, as well as those internal to Peru.

Internationally, increased global competition in the traditional exports cotton and sugar have induced farmers to shift production to horticultural products such as asparagus and sugar snap peas, responding to changing demand in Northern countries. Internally, implementation of structural adjustment and economic liberalization policies has eliminated previously generous input subsidies without addressing relatively high taxes on agricultural production [Arce 2005; Plaza and Stromquist 2006]. These changes leave Peruvian farmers at a comparative disadvantage as compared to foreign competitors in their local market.

Land reform

The large-scale farmers in this study are referred to by their community as *hacendados*, while the small-scale farmers are called *parceleros*. The *hacendados*

themselves don't use this term, as it is, in fact, inaccurate⁶. They are, rather, the sons of former *hacendados*, the owners of the large estate farms, which were subject to partial redistribution during the agrarian reform movement in 1969. The *parceleros* are sons of the men and women who worked on those former haciendas.

The haciendas, or *latifundios*, were broken up by the Peruvian national government in 1969. On the coast of Peru, no one owner was allowed to retain more than 50 hectares of land. The remaining land – sometimes thousands of hectares – was redistributed to groups of former hacienda workers, to be communally managed in the new land cooperatives. The former hacienda owners were paid for the land in government bonds; the cooperatives were to pay back the government over 10 years [Cleaves and Scurrah 1980].

After the fall of the military Velasco government in 1980, new policy was implemented that allowed the members of a cooperative to vote for de-collectivization. In general, the coastal cooperatives, including those in Cañete, chose to parcel the collectively held land. The new *parceleros* received 4-6 hectares of land [Trenchard 1998].

Predictably, this redistribution of land and alterations in tenure had profound implications for both the former hacienda owners and the new smallholders. Without any prompting, and indeed, without my having given much thought to the history of agrarian reform that was enacted over a generation ago, the farmers I interviewed in 2005 still

⁶ I have chosen to retain the label *hacendado*, though its denotation is not completely accurate, as it captures a power relationship and historical realities that are still central to the experience of these two groups of farmers. This is, however, a decision that is not without danger, as scientific literature is has its own ability to influence how its subjects' positions are maintained.

referenced the time of land reform as a defining moment in the history of their farms, and of themselves as farmers.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) developed from 1) the critical social science perspective and 2) the ‘language turn’ in social science. Critical discourse analysis seeks to understand “*the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance*” (italics in original) [van Dijk 1993/:249]. Dominance can be queried either by examining top-down processes, i.e. those precipitated by the dominators, or by looking at bottom-up processes, i.e. those engaged in by the target of discourses of domination.

This study examines the discourse of two groups of farmer-leaders, one more powerful, and one less powerful. Beyond the interaction of the two groups, they are situated in a social and political context of other social actors with whom they may also experience power differentials. The abuse of power leads to dominance and oppression. My analysis presented in this article seeks to make explicit some of the central issues of dominance and oppression (re)produced by farmer discourse, seeking to understand each group as possible perpetrators of discourses of dominance as well as objects of the same.

Previous critical discourse analyses have focused on deconstructing and understanding some of the global hegemonic discourses relevant to the following analysis. For example, Escobar [Escobar 1995], in what stands as the most thorough and best analysis of the international development discourse, identifies fundamental discursive themes and constructions that serve to reproduce and concretize dominance and oppression between the “developers” and the “developing”. He focuses on the creation of people in the global South – especially the rural poor – as objects of the

efforts of experts based in the global North. Escobar further identifies the discourses of technology and international free trade as crucial ways and means that this relationship is implemented and maintained. The impetus toward free trade policies, implementation of structural adjustment policies, and laissez-faire rural policies mentioned above are accompanied by strong ideologies and discourses reinforcing the moral rightness and inevitability of these changes. This is a central component of the international development discourse.

Thompson's [Thompson 2004] analysis of a speech given by the president of the World Bank regarding new information and communications technology initiatives in the form of the Development Gateway is a more recent application of CDA to the international development discourse. By strategically layering with the existing development discourse, new discourses about information and communications technology are being successfully integrated into the established development discourse. Ideologies about information and communications technology as a neutral tool, as a pragmatic, 'on-the-ground' innovation, and as further evidence of the scientific and technological expertise (and superiority) of those who possess it are less open to criticism from potential detractors by being explicitly woven into powerful existing discourse.

There are a growing number of critical analyses of discourse related to trade, agriculture and farmers, as well [Petrzelka 2004; Potter and Tilzey 2005; Saugeres 2002; Yamaguchi and Harris 2004]. Taken together, these studies demonstrate the dynamic tension between hegemonic, imposed discourse and that created by farmers themselves incorporating components of the imposed discourse. Petrzelka's study in particular explores how a community's selective and strategic adoption of scientific discourse about

their own land can lead to both new opportunities and challenges for a community; Yamaguchi and Harris also explore how scientific discourse is integrated into farmer discourse. Potter and Tilzey identify the unique way in which globally hegemonic free trade discourse is being integrated with a discourse of multi-functionality within the European Union's CAP. Saugeres explores how gender disparities in farming are in part maintained through the use of discourses about farm machinery, and also identifies how some women have created a discourse of opposition around machinery. We see that farmers, like all social actors, create strategic, unique discourse. That discourse relies on the presence of existing hegemonic discourses, either or both as ideological foils or as discourse resources. This process is echoed in my own research presented here, in which farmers respond to and make use of discourse regarding free trade, globalisation, and environmental management.

The fourteen farmers I interviewed are leaders within their respective groups, and as such their discourse has ramifications beyond representing their own ideology, values, and strategies. Leaders, as such, are admired and imitated – the individuals I interviewed are held to be 'good farmers' as is understood by their respective groups of peers, and their discourse shapes group values, ideology, and action. Furthermore, leaders have access to public discourses that represent their group to outsiders, as well as some access and control over how issues and players are represented to their own group [van Dijk 1993]. The values they espouse and stories they tell about farmers and agriculture in an era of globalization are the public image of these farmers to themselves as well as to outsiders.

Research design

The data presented here were collected between July and October 2006 in Cañete, Peru. I chose Cañete because it has long been in agricultural production, has farmers engaged in production for export at two very distinct scales, and these farmers have all had to respond to recent changes in international trade regimes. Furthermore, both of the groups of farmers interviewed are associated with strong agricultural organizations that were amenable to being involved in the research.

The *parceleros* are especially interesting because they are both small-scale farmers and commodity exporters, a combination that defies some of the classification schemes found in literature about farmers and trade in which scale, crop, and market can be used interchangeably as explanatory factors for attitudes and experiences of globalization. The *parceleros* I interviewed are first-generation landowners, owning between two and fourteen hectares of land. They grow cotton, potatoes, maize, sweet potatoes, and some have small areas devoted to horticultural crops. A few keep animals for family use, but only one regularly sold animal products – milk from his five cows. Crops are sold in a variety of markets, cotton to Peruvian textile mills, potato and sweet potato in the city of Cañete or Lima. Maize as grain is sold to confinement chicken farms recently located south of Lima, and, in one case, to a local brewery. Green maize is sold to the aforementioned small-scale dairy producers, to be used as fodder.

All of the *parceleros* included in this study work with the Instituto Rural de Valle Grande (Valle Grande) – a Catholic non-governmental organization (NGO) devoted to rural development and funded by mostly European donors. Valle Grande has a local office in Cañete, employing Peruvian professionals and administering their numerous

programs. In particular, the farmers I interviewed are all involved in a sugar snap pea project. The project seeks to help small farmers increase their income through exporting high value crops like sugar snap peas to northern markets, especially the U.S. and the E.U. Toward this goal, Valle Grande sponsors a variety of workshops, helps farmers acquire credit, and provides technical consulting services. I worked with Valle Grande to identify farmer participants, as well as to organize a focus group with participants at the end of my data collection.

Of the seven large-scale farmers that I interviewed, six are the sons of former hacienda owners. Though the 1969 land reform dictated that haciendas divest themselves of any land greater than 50 acres, by the mid-1980s the cooperatives that had been formed by the former hacienda workers were formally divided, and parceled out to individual families. Some of those families chose to sell their land back to former hacienda families, or to other *parceleros* [Cleaves and Scurrah 1980]. The large-scale farmers I interviewed own between 300 and 1500 hectares of land. They produce citrus, cotton, avocado, asparagus and table grapes, mostly for export to the U.S. or EU.

All of the *hacendados* I interviewed are on the Board of Directors of the Asociación de Productores de Cañete, an organization conducts agronomic research, makes official and unofficial recommendations to policymakers about agricultural policy, and works to create new markets for Cañete crops. The organization is usually called the “Estación Experimental” (EE), or Experiment Station, as the primary physical presence of the organization is a large research compound staffed by agronomists and technicians. Being on the Board of Directors of this locally (and arguably, nationally) powerful

organization, these respondents are seen as leaders and they play a role in framing discourse of agricultural policy and practices in the region.

I worked with staff of the two organizations – Valle Grande and the Estación Experimental – to compile an initial list of potential respondents to interview, employing a modified snowball technique to identify later respondents [see Esterberg 2002]. All of the interviews were conducted with the help of a Peruvian research assistant familiar with the area and organizations. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and were recorded. I began the interviews by asking very open-ended questions about the participant's farm and why he (all interview participants were men) was a farmer and why agriculture is important, and progressed to open-ended questions about what he thought about Peruvian agricultural policy, world agricultural policy, and ethical issues in agriculture. Finally, I summarized some of the perspectives I had already heard from other groups of farmers (the other group from Cañete, peasant farmers in the Peruvian Andes, conventional farmers from the American Midwest, and alternative farmers from the American Midwest), and asked what he thought about those perspectives. My assistant and I took extensive field notes during and after the interviews. The interviews were transcribed by native Spanish speakers, and I present translated quotes from the interviews in this paper. I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the interview transcripts, following the method outlined by Fairclough [2001]. I began by systematically coding themes in interview texts, as one would do in a traditional qualitative analysis. Then, within each thematic set of farmer quotes I identified subject and object positioning, lists of social actors, storylines, explicit statements about values and relationships, and particular layering of themes. I then searched for the strongest of these patterns in farmer

discourse, and those most related to my research questions about international trade, environment and social justice in relation to the specific context in which they were generated. The analysis presented here provides examples of these patterns and proceeds to compare *hacendado* with *parcelero* discourse.

Results and Discussion

Free trade

Components of the hegemonic free trade discourses are echoed in both *parceleros'* and *hacendados'* discourse. The themes of free trade and international markets are tightly coupled in the discourse of *hacendado* farmers, which often feature themselves as protagonists in stories about big business and international trade. They also focused on the changing demands of export markets, partly as a result of the private certifications that have emerged for the European and American markets, and expressed optimism that the free trade agreement with the United States, the Tratamiento de Libre Comercio (TLC), may offer them additional opportunities to access U.S. markets. All seven of the *hacendados* interviewed discussed themselves as businessmen, enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by new and growing markets.

In contrast to conventional farmers from the United States, who I interviewed for another component of my research, *hacendados* focused on reducing barriers imposed on their ability to export (e.g. export taxes), rather than on the advantages their competition may have. For example, one *hacendado* discussed how he would prefer to see Peruvian agricultural policy.

They should give more incentives to agriculture, that they should forgive all of the taxes on agriculture, in order [for us] to be able to compete with other countries. Because a foreign product costs 50% less than one that's

produced here. That's to say, rice from China is cheap. Potatoes from the Netherlands, when they're here in Peru, they are very, very cheap. Chilean fruit that they bring here is garbage because the best goes to Europe, the United States and such. They bring the cheap stuff here...(H4)⁷

Rather than suggesting a policy that would tax products coming into Peru, or for other countries to reduce subsidies or other price distorting policies, this farmer suggests that the best way to even the playing field would be for Peru to eliminate export taxes on exported Peruvian products. This *hacendado* discusses cheap imported products not to bemoan competition on the domestic market, but rather to buttress his contention that without export taxes, Peruvian products could compete in other markets the way foreign products compete in the Peruvian market. The list of nations in this quote further serves to normalize a radically international agricultural market.

New and emerging international markets are depicted as the best hope for Peruvian agriculture's future profitability. In response to a question about what he grew, another *hacendado* described the new ease with which he was able to market his tangerines:

Until about three years ago the market for citrus was all a local market. At least, we all competed for the [best] price in the same market. Today exports have grown substantially, which is good for the country because it is going to be seen as foreign currency for the nation. The price of tangerines for export is substantially larger than that offered in the local market. But, I think citrus is a good prospect because I say that the American market is going to have opened for Peru, then people that had investments in other sectors will invest in agriculture...(H2)

The array of themes associated together in this quote is a distinctive marker of *hacendado* discourse: 1) competition; 2) nationalism; 3) the profit available in foreign

⁷ H1 denotes the participant identification, H = *hacendado*, 1 = participant number. I will continue to use this convention throughout the article.

markets; and 4) international investment. At least six of the seven *hacendados* demonstrably linked all of these themes in their discussion of their role in agriculture.

In addition to higher prices, new markets are linked by *hacendados* to generating foreign currency, which is in turn linked to the greater good of the nation. Foreign currency was specifically mentioned by three *hacendado* farmers, though I did not ask questions any more specific than “Why is agriculture important for the country?”

Parcelero farmers also mentioned generating foreign currency as an advantage offered by export agriculture. In response to my question about why agriculture is important for the nation of Peru, one *parcelero* respondent answered:

Of course, for example, it’s a little like, exporting the peas because that allows us foreign currency, this is important for all Peruvians because with this we first comply with our obligations to pay taxes. In Peru, the products that leave generate foreign currency. That’s why it’s important that our products leave, if possible. (P3)

While an emphasis on foreign currency is a kind of instrumental reasoning, the benefits of foreign investment are seen to accrue at a national rather than personal or family scale. The line of reasoning that makes this leap between personal and national benefits echoes that of the global free trade discourse linking personal profit to overall good of the global economy, and thereby, society.

Like *hacendados*, *parceleros* also emphasize the potential profit in new markets. Further, the increased profitability is presented as more fair, the implication being that farmers deserve a higher price than they receive on the local or national markets.

Parcelero discourse was unique in its focus on justice related to prices, none of the *hacendados* mentioned “fair prices” or similar themes, while fairness or justice was mentioned by nearly all of the *parceleros*.

[Exports allow us] to have a better income at a higher level, to have a better price, too. And, in this way, I think like this we can give somewhat of an education to our children. (P1)

Several of the *parceleros* connected the increased income from export agriculture directly to their children's education, though we see in this representative quote, with the words "I think" and "somewhat", the farmer indicates he does not have complete confidence in this new opportunity. Education was notably absent from the reasons *hacendados* gave for their desire for higher prices. In fact they didn't offer explicit reasons for why higher prices are a positive thing.

The ambivalence in the *parcelero* quote above is echoed in much of *parcelero* discourse about their role in international trade. New export markets are tied to ideas about new social and economic opportunities and justice, but there is also unease about the risk inherent in new markets and in not knowing what their competition will be like in the future.

Free trade agreement with the United States

The bilateral free trade agreement being negotiated between the U.S. and Peru received substantial media coverage during my research. While *hacendado* commentary on the subject paralleled their overall endorsement of the benefits of free trade and new markets, *parcelero* discourse reflected a very different unease. For example, one *parcelero* said:

...[I]n Peru, we're hearing...alot about the free trade agreement [between the U.S. and Peru], but no one has ever sat down with a farmer, with a true farmer, a country man, where they ought to find the real solution to the problem...(P4)

This quote introduces us to another marker of *parcelero* discourse, an us/them dualism between small farmers (*parceleros*) and the various powers that be. This individual

emphasizes his expertise and unique – and valuable – perspective by using the list of synonyms “a farmer”, “a true farmer”, and “a country man” to separate himself and his colleagues from decision-makers in Lima. The most common association with ‘us’ as small farmers is that of impotence and injustice in relation to ‘them’.

...[I]t’s a lie that we are going to have a market here, to bring our product we ought to be at the same level as them...they have their subsidized products and we don’t have that, I’ve seen that, them with their products, they’re going to reduce our products, in any case I don’t agree with this...(P2)

This time the us/them dualism is between small Peruvian farmers and American farmers. In this quote the American farmers (“they”) are the subjects – those who have a negative impact on the *parceleros*’ products, the object in this sentence. This is one of the few times that farmers of any stripe are identified as subjects in the *parceleros*’ discourse regarding trade and policy, and it is significant that it is in the context of causing harm to the *parceleros*.

Also referencing U.S. production subsidies, another *parcelero* said:

In agriculture at the global level, the agriculture is better than ours. They’re reimbursed for a part of their costs, that they call subsidies. Then the farmer makes money. This doesn’t happen with us...here we pay a lot for things like insecticides, fungicides, and pesticides...I know that in other countries the government supports the farmers with subsidies...(P2)

In this case the us/them dualism is we, the small Peruvian farmers and they, the American farmers. In the first sentence, we again see farmers invoking the traditional development discourse element of northern technological and intellectual superiority. The irony in the *parceleros*’ statement about northern farmers making money is that, at least for many conventional commodity farmers in the U.S., their implication is correct. If not for government subsidies, American farmers would not be making a profit.

Another *parcelero* leader echoes this discourse in his response to a question about the TLC:

The imported products hurt us, their products are already cheaper and of better quality...and this is why we don't progress...(P4)

American farmers are the actors in this statement. The theme of 'quality' ran throughout both *hacendado* and *parcelero* discourse, and I will discuss it more thoroughly below. The quote here identifies American farmers as potential rivals in both local markets, and in other export markets. At least in the arena of policy and trade, there is not necessarily a sentiment of shared identity with farmers in other parts of the world.

Certification, quality and agri-chemicals

As mentioned in the introductory section of this article, part of the change that has come to export markets in recent years are the requirements of private importers. Most of the exports from Cañete farms go to the United States or Europe, especially Spain. These countries have specific regulations that have to be met in order for them to accept agricultural produce from outside of the borders, for example the U.S. regulates how much residue of various pesticides can be on imported vegetables and fruits, and what kinds of precautions need to be taken if a product comes from an area known to have particular pests. However, private export companies are now developing their own certifications, which may have many different, and new, kinds of directives, including specific requirements regarding the use of agrichemicals, as well as quality standards and phytosanitary measures [Busch and Bain 2004]. Both *hacendados* and *parceleros* are subject to these new demands. One of the *hacendados* who produces citrus says:

Every day the requirements of the markets are greater. For us here, five or six years ago, there was one English supermarket and they came to our packer and didn't give it a lot of thought, they were interested in the fruit.

But today, the requirements are much greater and you have to comply with the certifications. (H1)

Though I have indicated that the *hacendado* farmers are the more powerful players in the Cañete agricultural sector, here the farmer casts himself and his peers as the objects of the actions taken by a particular English supermarket importer. The storyline in this quote is about the English supermarket identifying Cañete as a source for tangerines – ‘they were interested in our fruit’ – implies that there was some quality about the tangerines specific to Cañete that attracted them. Then, after farmers had this established market, along come the supermarket chains with new certification programs that they require all of their producers to comply with. This quote tells a story about change, and especially about the increasing difficulty in accessing foreign markets. It also demonstrates the situated nature of power and dominance. Though *hacendado* farmers may exert dominance to some degree in their own region, in relation to other actors in their value chain they reveal themselves to be much less powerful.

We can compare this to *parcelero* discourse about the same topics, though the path we took to get to the topic of certification in the *parcelero* leader interviews was very different from that with *hacendado* leaders. As I did in my interviews with both groups of farmer leaders, I asked *parceleros* about when and why they use agrichemicals. They told me it is common for their lending institutions – whether Valle Grande or a bank – to require input from a crop technician in determining when to apply pesticides. So, while *parceleros* identify their greater involvement in export production as a potential method to reduce the use of pesticides, in order to be involved in that market they are

required to give some of their decision-making to a technician chosen by their bank or organization.

Another connection that *parceleros* made to the new export markets and agrichemicals was the increased need for ‘hygiene’. By hygiene they are referring to both the personal hygiene of the people who work with the crop, and also what might be called ‘phytosanitary’ measures in English – the various practices, mostly dictated by the government, designed to prevent the spread of plant pathogens and pests. The personal hygiene of workers was something mentioned by several of the farmers I interviewed. One *parcelero* I interviewed was able to point out his and his family’s apparel as we talked. They were wearing white face masks, aprons, and hairnets as they sorted and packed the peas for shipping.

He told me,

In the snap peas you have to practice as good hygiene as possible. The snap peas are already going to the United States, to Spain...The people there want healthy things, including not being able to apply whatever kind of pesticide...(P3)

This particular quote, typical of the *parceleros*’ discourse, demonstrates the linkage of agrichemical reduction and foreign markets. Of particular note is that *parcelero* farmers distinguish between “the people there”, that is, the consumers in the United States and Spain, and by implication, “the people here”, in Peru. The foreign consumers want “healthy things”, and they are willing to pay for it. By implication, the consumers in Peru are not concerned with ‘healthy things’. There’s the feeling that the people here are less sophisticated than their American or Spanish counterparts, a

sentiment that echoes the traditional development discourse which remains very strong in many parts of rural Peru.

The gentlemen that buy from us tell us ‘treat it with this, because I don’t want to have any contaminated’, and if they detect some insecticide that hasn’t been recommended by them, they can shut the window on us, therefore we need to be careful. (P2)

This quote demonstrates another aspect of the discourse of the environment that the farmers use. Environmental improvement is seen to come as a result of these export regulations imposed by exporting companies or by foreign governments, and that can be traced back to the North American or European consumers. Environmental improvements are also linked to discussions about technological packages. A farmer receives a loan at the beginning of a planting season for all of the inputs he will need. However, most of the lenders in Cañete require that the farmer adhere to a very specific plan for his farm, part of which is the use of the services of a consultant to determine when and what to treat the crops with.

Another farmer more explicitly links worker protection to the themes of markets and hygiene.

...[N]ow, when we’re packing the people have to be well-covered, to comply with all the requirements that they ask [for] – fingernails well cut, hair covered, no earrings...with gloves...[you have to have] equal hygiene to apply insecticides. [The workers] have to bring water, they don’t want them to use the irrigation water and we have to wash our hands with drinking water, and then disinfect our hands with chlorine, and then keep records of all of this...(P3)

The regulations about water use involve two separate concerns – first, workers must have access to clean water for their personal safety, and second, workers must disinfect their hands before working in the packing tent, using clean water and chlorine. These two

regulations, with very different purposes, are linked in the farmers' discourse. Therefore, because the phytosanitary standards are linked to "hygiene", a "healthy" product, and worker protection we see a clear association in the discourse between new Northern markets, and reductions in agrichemical use, and worker protection. Because agrichemical use has been the environmental issue most discussed in this region, especially by various environmental organizations, by extension we see a link between environmental improvement and Northern consumers. In the *parcelero* discourse, then, environmental improvement is instigated by non-local, largely unknown, but sophisticated and knowledgeable actors.

Parceleros might have chosen an equally "truthful" phrasing of the situation – perhaps something along the lines of "After consulting with the technician, I have decided that I'll reduce the use of pesticides. I know it's healthier for my family and workers, and besides, I think that this product will be attractive to consumers in Spain and the United States." Notice the active role of the farmer in this fictional quote, something quite missing from the actual *parcelero* discourse.

Though new markets clearly offer Cañete farmers opportunities for higher and more stable incomes, there are a couple of potential pitfalls to these new markets. First, Cañete farmers' access to the North American and Spanish market may be temporally limited. We can look at the example of asparagus to imagine how this might occur. Peru is currently second in world asparagus production, after China. It exports most of its production to the U.S. Until a few years ago, Peru also supplied a large percentage of the European fresh asparagus market. However, African farmers, most notably those in Kenya, have begun to plant asparagus with an eye on the European market. As a result,

global asparagus prices have been reduced, and Peruvian farmers are no longer the preferred supplier for Europe. It is not unlikely that something similar could happen in the sugar snap pea market.

The second possibility that may interrupt the relationship described above – that between pea producers and discerning Northern consumers – is the growing Peruvian middle class. Middle-class Peruvian consumers are much more likely to purchase high value foods like fresh fruits and vegetables [Senaeur and Geotz 2003], and the growth of this segment of the Peruvian population may lead to a profitable local market for the Cañete farmers' peas and other horticultural products. Another potential for local markets are the growing – though still tiny, relative to other markets – U.S. style farmers markets in Lima and other large Peruvian cities. Among *hacendados* and also among the university researchers I worked with in Lima, there is some hope and expectation that farmers markets aimed at the middle and upper class urban consumers will offer another avenue for Peruvian farmers to sell their products without the intervention of international consolidators. Dolan and Humphrey (2001) discuss African horticultural products as part of buyer-driven value chains, where the decision-making functions within the value chain are in the hands of exporters and especially of Northern retailers. The situation with sugar snap peas produced in Cañete is similar.

Land Reform, identity and agency

It is not possible to understand *hacendado* and *parcelero* discourse without taking land reform and its aftermath into account. An *hacendado*, in response to a question about what he enjoyed most about being a farmer, began with an account of idyllic country life, but then cautioned against romanticism about modern agriculture:

You have to see it always as a business. Definitely in other times one wouldn't have had to be so worried about it like big business, without being so efficient it was [still] a big business; the big areas quickly allowed you to have smaller margins and with larger areas one could be more profitable. These days it's not like that. The areas have been reduced. Well then, one has to be more efficient. It's important not to lose this vision of business... We don't forget that it's a business like any other...(H1)

The 'other times' he references is the time before land reform, when his family may have controlled several thousand hectares, and had access to the labor of the landless peasants of the region. Like other *hacendados*, this farmer emphasizes the change in agriculture over time, linking land reform to the impetus toward more challenging market situations. Further, like many of the *hacendados* I interviewed, he portrays himself as more of a businessman than farmer. This individual's surroundings contributed to this image, we were talking in a large office overlooking his citrus processing facility, where workers covered in white masks and hairnets sorted and packed tangerines, oranges and grapefruit.

This oblique reference to land reform was about as specific as the *hacendados* were about the process that represented such dramatic change for their families. Though it figures as a historical watershed in changing agricultural practices, there is not much reference to other impacts that it must have had on the individuals I spoke with, or the community as a whole.

Parceleros, on the other hand, often began an account of themselves as farmer with the story of how they received their land through the reform process.

I began as a worker, primarily as a worker from 1961...and then I worked with the *patrones* until 1973. In the year '73, we [in Cañete] passed the agrarian reform and then came the formation of the agrarian cooperative...until the year 1983, 1984. Around then, no later than that, we passed the reappropriation of the lands directly as parcels and then

until 2005, I have been a farmer. In '83, '84, I stopped being a worker and began being a farmer. (P5)

It is telling to note that this respondent characterizes the period of the agricultural collectives – in this case, 1973 to 1984 – as a time when he was a ‘worker’ and not a ‘farmer’. Most of the *parceleros* identified the mid-1980s as the time when they began farming.

Some scholars identify the experience of land reform as one of the primary means through which Latin American small farmers understand their relationship with the state. For example, Van der Haar’s (2005) analysis of EZLN discourse in Chiapas, Mexico demonstrates a link between the peasant rebellion and early peasant struggles for land reform – small-scale farmers are protagonists in the story of Mexican land reform, and while the history of reform, especially in Chiapas, was not always uncontentious, small scale farmers were active, forceful players. However, land reform in Peru has not been linked with a strong peasant movement, especially in the coastal region. Though a central experience in the formation of the farmer-state relationship in Cañete, Peruvian land reform tended to concretize the positioning of small farmers as objects rather than subjects in their relationship with the state and other political institutions.

The same *parcelero* quoted above, describing his personal history of land reform, later discussed what happened in 1990 when the national government and local banks began to refuse loans to *parceleros*.

...[T]he bank disappeared and left us orphans, eh, who would support us? Who would lend us money...we didn’t have anywhere to go...it was like the sky falling...[then Valle Grande] told us this, that ‘We’re going to finance you. We’re going to have machinery and inputs [for you].’... (P5)

This quote places *parceleros* firmly in the role of victim of the bank and the government. The development organization, Valle Grande, eventually comes to their rescue with financing and technical advice.

Another *parcelero* explained how he approached Valle Grande for an explanation of what the new trade agreement between the United States and Peru would mean for small scale producers:

I said to the Valle Grande engineers, I wanted them to explain to me, 'What is the TLC? The farmers, we aren't well-informed about this, we don't know if it would be good or bad.' We're going to see, so far there's nothing. Maybe we are wrong, we need for them to guide us. (P1)

The most significant aspect of this quote is the relationship between the *parcelero* and the organization. The *parcelero* depicts himself, and others like him, as ignorant, requiring the organization's professionals to advise them on what would be best for them to do in the face of this new policy. The message is that these farmers need training, outreach, and assistance, 'they' need to help 'us'.

In contrast to *parcelero* subject positioning of themselves, the discourse of *hacendados* places them firmly in active roles. A hallmark of *hacendado* discourse is the theme locating themselves as big businessmen. The *hacendados* certainly own some of the largest agricultural businesses in the Cañete region, with extensive compounds, cleaning, sorting and processing facilities and many employees, including well-armed security guards at some of the farms.

The preceding analysis demonstrates a distinct difference in how *parceleros* and *hacendados* see themselves as actors in agricultural policy and trade. We may well interpret some of this analysis as demonstrating domination on the part of *hacendados*

over *parceleros* and others like them. Though my data regarding the direct interaction of *hacendados* and *parceleros* is limited, my final activity in Cañete was to conduct a focus group with the *parcelero* farmers, to collect texts of farmers interacting around some of my research themes. Unplanned by myself, and without any attempt to disrupt the research that I know of, some of the *hacendados* were invited to observe the focus group. This interaction between the two groups of farmers and the technicians of Valle Grande served to solidify my general impressions and initial analysis of *parcelero* discourse. It was assumed by all participants, with the exception of myself, that it would not only be acceptable but useful for *hacendado* farmers to observe the *parcelero* farmers discussing their ideas about trade and ethics among themselves. *Hacendados* for their part, adopted a paternalistic discourse with regards to smaller scale farmers as well as their farm laborers, which I will discuss in the next section.

Agriculture's role in the nation

Both groups of Cañete farmer leaders emphasize the importance of agriculture to provide employment. In response to a question about if and how agriculture will be important for Peru's future, an *hacendado* responded:

I am convinced, we are a nation eminently agricultural, we have many rural areas if agriculture would be developed it is going to be the principal source of jobs. Agriculture demands a lot of labor, whereas where agriculture is developed we see a source of jobs...I really believe that the day that the nation has a developed agriculture or that the government really considers agriculture as a basic activity [industry], I believe that for the most part the development of the nation will be assured. Of this I am convinced, we are a nation eminently agricultural.(H3)

First, this *hacendado* establishes his authority through several means. Using the first person 'I' makes a strong statement about his comfort level in expressing his opinions about such matters, and in fact, this was a pattern much more prevalent in

hacendado discourse than in *parcelero* discourse, who tended to express their opinions framing them as something ‘we’ believe, or something that ‘one’ knows to be true. There is also an implied critique of agricultural policy as it currently stands in the choice of ‘if agriculture would be developed’ and ‘the government really considers’, the message is that the government might pay lip service to agriculture as a ‘basic activity’, but it hasn’t acted on that rhetoric. This characterization of government as indurate, as obstinately ignorant of the potential that agriculture has for advancing the interests of Peru, both domestically and internationally, is a strong theme in farmer discourse. It echoes broader discourses among the general populous about government as largely ineffective in addressing the nation’s needs, and rather more dedicated to bureaucracy and taxation.

This quote further hints at the fact that Peru is a nation uniquely suited to agricultural production, that it offers an almost unlimited source of employment and economic development. Development itself is a strong theme in farmer discourse. This farmer uses the word three times in this short quote – pointing out the contrast between ‘if agriculture would be developed’ to ‘where agriculture is developed’ and in the assurance that such development would assure ‘the development of the nation’. This speaker relies on the idea of development being well-understood by the listener.

Development here invokes the international development discourse created and deployed in the second half of the twentieth century, by innumerable institutions and organizations from the World Bank, to national governments, to NGOs. The international development discourse links hunger to the need for industrialization and thereby economic growth [Escobar 1995]. More specifically, hunger itself can be addressed through scientific and technological advancement in agriculture by way of

technology transfer so that the poor country can produce more food, through food aid from industrialized nations, or through the poor country's producing goods from export, either agricultural or industrial, which will result in the country's ability to purchase food, as well as invest in other 'development' projects like infrastructure.

The speaker quoted above is invoking the industrial agriculture aspect of the development discourse. If the agricultural sector in Peru were 'developed', farmers like him would produce more export crops, and be able to hire workers to work in the fields and orchards, as well as in packing and processing. Another *hacendado* responded with this quote when I asked what a farmers' ethical responsibilities were:

My responsibility, I plant, I provide individual jobs they have to live, because if I wouldn't plant, how would the people live without work? And the valley here, we're in Cañete, all of the valley almost is agriculture. There isn't mining. Throughout the valley the people are engaged in agriculture. (H5)

Like the speaker of the first quote in this section, this farmer also emphasizes the importance of agriculture for employment. For readers located in the developed world, employment may not seem like the critical way in which agriculture benefits society. One might rather expect the emphasis to be placed on the production of food, as it is among American farmers, or even on the provision of cultural or environmental benefits. However, Peru has an unemployment rate hovering around 10%, with many more underemployed, and the last two presidential elections have focused on how the national government could rectify that situation [Economist 2004]. By integrating discourse of unemployment, *hacendado* farmers are portraying their agricultural activity as a means to address some of the negative impacts of this unemployment, establishing the critical nature of what they are engaged in.

Agriculture is depicted by the *parceleros* as the basis for all economic activity in Peru, and indeed, the world. I asked farmers “Is agriculture important for Peru?”. They looked at me as though I were daft. Many *parcelero* farmers responded very simply – “yes, of course”, or “yes, it is.” Though my question was phrased such that a yes or no response was possible, most similarly structured questions elicited longer responses without further prompting. The very simple responses to this question about the significance of agriculture is telling. Coming toward the end of what were almost all cordial, informal, and very open interviews, these short responses indicate that the farmer was surprised and was perhaps reacting with caution at what he may have felt was a change in the interview’s tone or character. My feeling is that the several farmers who reacted in this way felt as though this question was a non-sequitor to the preceding 20 minutes of the interview in which I had asked questions about why the man was a farmer, and what his farm was like. In the mind of the farmer, I had already demonstrated that I knew how important agriculture was, that I had commonsense.

When asked to expand on their initial brief responses, *parceleros* focused largely on economic themes, though social welfare was referenced obliquely. This is in contrast to peasant farmers in the Peruvian Andes that I have interviewed for other parts of my dissertation, who usually discuss social and cultural meaning when asked about the importance of agriculture. Iowa farmers that I have interviewed also tend to discuss social, family, and cultural values rather than economic when asked about the importance of agriculture.

[Agriculture] is important because it is the principal base, it’s also the provision of food, the industry, the food for the population. If there weren’t agriculture, what would happen? How would all of us live? (P5)

... the farmer that earns [money], then he distributes it...we say when agriculture is alive, the people of the community are alive. For example, the butcher, the shoemaker, the clothing merchant, the vegetable merchant, all of them then. This is what drives agriculture...(P3)

These two quotes both describe agriculture as the base of the local economy, as well as the source of food. It is important to note that these farmers are largely growing for foreign markets or non-food crops, so the mention of food for the community seems to be a general reference to agriculture rather than to their own operations. However, like large scale farmers in Iowa who also grow crops that are used as animal feed or exported, *parcelero* farmers seem to identify as food producers.

The significance of exports to balance of trade is also not lost on *parcelero* farmers.

Of course, for example, it's a little like the export of the peas ... this is important because with this we mostly comply with our obligations to pay the taxes in Peru, and the products that leave generate foreign currency. Because of this it is important that our products go outside [of Peru], if it's possible to do...

In addition to providing the economic raw materials for the country, agriculture is also important in generating tax dollars and in addressing the balance of trade about which so many Southern countries are concerned. There is a sense in *parcelero* discourse that, as good citizens, they have the obligation to be involved in export agriculture for the good of the country. Finally, one farmer summed up the importance of agriculture to the nation by telling me:

Yes, it's important for the *pueblo* [referring to the country] because there wouldn't be development [without it]...(P6)

This group of farmers saw their life style – as small farmers – as a step toward something better for both their family and their country. Many of the men I interviewed specifically discussed export agriculture as a means to generate income in order to send

their children to school, so that they might become “professionals”, and “better themselves”. The discourse of development that suffuses their conversation also implies that they expect their current livelihood to be a step toward more advanced – technologically and socially – states.

National agricultural policy

Neither *hacendados* nor *parceleros* discussed Peruvian national agricultural policy in positive terms. One *parcelero* said:

All of our earnings go to pay the taxes. The nineteen percent of the sale of corn goes toward taxes, we farmers ask ‘Where is the money going?’ Like this we pay taxes, the government ought to be responsive to us, at least helping us to commercialize and in the payment of IVG [Valle Grande] for seeds and fertilizers. With such a low price, one can’t, we aren’t able to give a good education to our children. As a small producer we are able to educate one or two children. With a good harvest and a good price, we can extract something, but with a bad harvest and a bad price, we can’t get anything. (P5)

For the farmers in this study, these policy changes over the last 15 years have meant dramatic changes in the way they farm and market their products, and in the level of financial risk they experience. Many of these changes were seen as effects of the particular administration at the time of the change – meaning that Fujimori was well-liked and Toledo was blamed for the reduction in “apoyo” or support, to farmers from the national government.

Parceleros characterized former and wished for Peruvian subsidies as “support” from the government, and subsidies received by farmers in the United States or Europe, though they create much stiffer competition for the *parceleros*, were often not mentioned until I specifically asked about them. Production subsidies to northern farmers then were sometimes characterized as unfair, but more often the Peruvian policy was compared

unfavorably to that in the U.S. or Europe – the implication being that farmers in both countries deserve some kinds of subsidization. Generally, *parceleros* characterized themselves as less powerful actors in a relationship with the national Peruvian government, large companies, or foreign agriculture/farmers.

Well, the policy doesn't support us at all, in agriculture. Right now we're forgotten, since President Fujimori it's been two or three years that we've been forgotten, and they don't support us at all. (P1)

In this quote we can identify several important discursive elements. First, there is a they/us dualism. “They” are the national government, “we” are the small farmers. The reference to President Fujimori was fairly typical in the *parcelero* discourse. As outlined above, Fujimori, while instituting dramatic economic policy change, also implemented programs that allowed small farmers easier access to credit, and his administration was accompanied by some of the fastest economic growth in Latin America during that time period. In general, *parcelero* discourse was wistful in regards to Fujimori.

The final element in this quote that I want to draw attention to is the overall sense that the speaker is overlooked. “Right now we're forgotten...” is a fairly explicit indictment of the current administration's policy-making protocol, as is the further reference to “they” in the final clause. Farmers don't feel like they are a part of setting policy.

When discussing Peruvian free trade policy, farmers focused on the need for the government to “support” farmers, and there was a strong tendency to compare the status quo with previous agricultural policies. When discussing international agricultural trade and policy, farmers focused on the production subsidies that farmers in the United States and Europe receive, connecting those subsidies to price distortions occurring in their

local markets. Perhaps most striking, farmers, in talking about agricultural policy, usually discussed themselves as objects of government or “their” actions, rather than as active subjects.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand how the discourse of farmer leaders in Cañete reflect recent trends toward globalization in the value chains that affect them, and especially to characterize the ideology of said discourse. Using critical discourse analysis as a methodological tool to investigate these topics has been quite useful. One of the more crucial aspects of CDA that is apparent in the foregoing analysis is the importance of context for understanding the texts (that is, the interviews with farmer leaders). While there are certainly aspects about farmer experience of economic globalization that can be generalized across groups, it is also clear that different groups experience globalization in starkly different terms, depending on their historical, political, social, and indeed ecological, context.

Hacendados, members of a historically privileged class, retaining both the material and power vestiges of that privilege, express a discourse tightly aligned with the globally hegemonic discourse in which free trade, competition and profit result in national development. *Parceleros*, however, do not echo this ideology in its entirety. New foreign markets, willing to pay for ‘healthy’ products, are positioned as the one apparent option for *parcelero* farmers to make a profit. This is roughly consistent with *hacendado* discourse regarding markets. However, unlike *hacendados*, *parceleros* explicitly identify the benefits that profit will bring them – the opportunity to provide an education to their children. Further, *parceleros* tell a story about their preferred role for

the national government in ‘supporting’ farmers economically and technically, a story in which small farmers are the victims of a neglectful government. This notion of support further contradicts the free-market neo-liberal ideology embraced by the *hacendados*, and that forms such a central component of hegemonic discourse regarding economic globalization.

The two groups of farmers are addressing the disarticulation posed by economic globalization in very different ways. *Hacendado* farmers have adopted a ready-made discourse, one they may well have had greater access to than small farmers by virtue of their economic and political privilege, but also one that, again because of their relative privilege, better reflects their knowledge and experiences of these changes. *Parceleros*’ discourse regarding economic globalization, however, is not as consistent, and doesn’t yet completely maintain an internal logic. We might conclude that *parcelero* discourse is still developing, still responding to these relatively recent changes.

Academic literature addressing agricultural sustainability usually discusses a reduction in pesticide application, or a change to those with less negative side effects, as a decision with environmental or cost reduction benefits⁸. However, Cañete farmers, especially *parceleros* but also *hacendados*, have created a discourse linking reduced pesticide use to the sophisticated demands of Northern consumers. There are two ways we can interpret this result, which are not mutually exclusive. First, we can see in trends toward increased international trade opportunities for farmers and their communities of the global south to reap significant benefits associated with reduced pesticide use.

⁸ Often farmers are able to increase their profit when they reduce their expenditures on various inputs such as pesticides.

Farmers may generate more profit because they spend less on agricultural inputs, they may adopt alternative practices to control pests that have additional production benefits, there may be a positive impact on non-agricultural species in the area, there may be less cancer among farmers and farm workers, etc. We might also like to think about the power that consumers have in this interpretation. As they do in purchasing fair trade or organically certified products, northern consumers might be exercising a positive influence on areas from where they receive their food.

The second way we might think about this emerging discourse linking northern consumers to reduced pesticide use (and the benefits thereof) is that Cañete farmers have ceded power over this aspect of environmental quality to remote, impersonal, even imaginary entities, who may or, more likely, may not have any compelling reason to care about the environmental quality of Cañete, Peru. If this is indeed the case, then farmers risk losing these benefits if they lose their particular markets, which is in no way unlikely. *Hacendados* may be better positioned to maintain their markets, as they grow a more diversified suite of export crops and have a much longer history of supplying those markets. *Parceleros*, in their green pea production, already compete with Guatemalan peasant farmers, as well as large-scale African farmers in the markets to which they currently have access, and the expectation of maintaining their current markets is, therefore, tenuous. If one of the unintended consequences of the new discourse linking pesticide reduction to Northern consumer demands is a concretization of this story into ideology, the very real, and valued, benefits of pesticide reduction may well be ephemeral.

Cañete farmer leader discourse regarding labor and agriculture is entirely consistent with the current hegemonic globalization discourse. Poor, populous countries have an advantage in producing things that require little economic capital investment, little research and development, and a great deal of labor. Therefore, in the ‘global marketplace’, Peru ought to be perfectly suited to agricultural commodity production, especially those products that require labor (i.e. fruits and vegetables). However, farmer discourse goes even further and contends that agriculture is the ‘basis for the nation’ – privileging agriculture over other labor-intensive industries (e.g. mining) in a way that subverts the dominant discourse regarding labor, in which all labor-intensive industries are equally appropriate. Peru, the farmers contend, is specifically and uniquely suited to agriculture.

The most obvious finding in regards to farmer discourse about national agricultural policy is that farmers are not happy with it as it currently stands. Both groups discussed taxes on their production as the primary hurdle they had to manage on their way toward making a profit. Especially prevalent in *parcelero* discourse, the national government itself was depicted as the bad guy in the story of agriculture – discussed in much more sinister terms than international competitors, agricultural pests and disease, or other groups of farmers (all of which were mentioned at least once as obstacles). *Parceleros* indicated very little ability to communicate their needs to the government, much less take effective action to see change. *Hacendados* expressed slightly more ability to communicate with decision-makers, mostly by way of their organization, but also expressed even stronger and more specific frustration with current policy.

If we accept that farmer leaders are engaged in creating and deploying strategic discourse, what are the implications of these conclusions? Discourse in both groups of Cañete farmers largely discounts both the Peruvian government and Peruvian consumers as sources for positive impacts on either policy or practice. The good guys in Cañete farmer discourse are Northern consumers and businesses and development organizations. Only the *hacendados* indicate that they, themselves, take positive action on their own behalf, *parceleros* cast themselves as victims or beneficiaries of other actors. It seems that this data indicates that although new international markets may offer some opportunity for Cañete farmers, small farmers are especially vulnerable to the vagaries of such markets, for both material and ideological reasons.

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Chapter 4: Farmer Organizations and Discourses of Empowerment

Introduction

Farmers around the world are faced with the challenges posed by economic globalization and the need to balance economic concerns with social and ecological sustainability. In order to successfully navigate these tricky waters, farmers, as individuals and collectively, need to be able to take action toward their own goals and interests. It seems self-evident that farmer organizations could be central tools and locations for developing farmer empowerment. However, examining discursive social practices of farmers and their organizations reveals that not all groups of farmers create equally empowering discourses.

This article is a result of a critical discourse analysis of interview transcripts from five groups of farmer leaders combined with secondary materials from their associated organizations. Discourse elements reflecting four components of empowerment are identified through this study: 1) discursive content regarding knowledge about agricultural policy, trade, and environmental issues; 2) subject mode regarding personal opinion, 3) discussion of realized or potential personal action, and 4) discussion of realized or potential collective action. The concepts of cultural and social capital are useful in explaining the differences among the five bodies of discourse (i.e. the sets of interview transcripts and secondary organizational materials), and in unearthing the roots of these differences. The five groups considered are: conventional Iowa farmers; alternative Iowa farmers; large-scale export producers in Cañete, Peru; small-scale export producers in Cañete, Peru; and subsistence farmers in Huancayo, Peru.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is both a theoretical perspective and social inquiry method . CDA allows us to examine the underlying ideology and potential effects of language as social practice(Fairclough 2001; van Dijk 1993). Though the more commonly understood usage of the word discourse refers merely to the conversational interaction between two or more people, or to the formal prepared speech of political leaders, discourse in the sense I employ it here refers to language as social practice, as social practice produced and reproduced in particular ways within particular social groups.

Critical discourse analysis “begins with the issues” instead of the text, as some other language-based approaches might. CDA can help us examine “how language figures within social relations of power and domination; how language works ideologically; the negotiation of social and personal identities...it is critical in the sense that it is committed to progressive social change; it has an emancipatory ‘knowledge interest’” (Fairclough 2001:230).

As such, critical discourse analysis is especially suited to questions regarding empowerment of traditionally disempowered groups within the larger society. In this case, I employ CDA to query farmer empowerment in the context of economic globalization and environmental management. Farmer organizations are often regarded as sites for farmer empowerment regarding these issues, among others (see, for exampleBebbington 1991; Wells 1998). This study seeks to understand how discourse can reflect, and possibly augment, farmer empowerment.

Connecting individuals and organization via discourse

The relationship between individual farmer discourse and organizational discourse can be partially understood by considering Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus refers to an individual's collection of dispositions – attitudes, values, strategies and modes of operating – that vary by personal experience, and reflects positions within social structure. Habitus, then, determines the bounds of the “infinite yet strictly limited” universe of possible social practice.

Those individuals with similar experiences – especially those who share social positions like class, ethnicity or profession – will demonstrate similar habitus. In a process that is both reflexive and recursive, groups or organizations whose members share habitus will function to institutionalize habitus into organizational ideology and structures.

Both ideology and discourse can be thought of as cultural capital, embodied in habitus “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu 1986:243). The stories that farmers tell about agricultural production and the role of farmers in determining agricultural policy and economic structure and their underlying ideologies and values are transmitted over time, and “can be acquired...in the absence of any deliberate inculcation and therefore quite unconsciously” (Bourdieu 1986:245). Though I prefer an understanding of cultural and social capital to Bourdieu's exclusive focus on the individual and instrumental, that is not to say that cultural capital, including discourse, is not often used “as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the fields of cultural production...and beyond them in the field of social classes- struggles in which the agents wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this

objectified capital” (247). This is the conscious deployment of discourse to purposeful ends.

So, if farmer discourse is a form of cultural capital, how is that related to farmer organizations and empowerment? I think we can look to the concept of organizational social capital to better understand this relationship.

Social capital is a property of social structures, resulting from interactions between individuals. It is a resource – i.e. it can be used to accomplish some directed (rational) action. Social capital not only facilitates certain actions, but also constrains action, but all social relations result in some form of social capital. Social capital can be used to create other kinds of capital – e.g. financial or human (Coleman 1988). Further, we can think about two kinds of relations between individuals that give rise to social capital - weak or strong ties. Weak ties – those of ‘acquaintance’ – seem to function especially well for information flow and in maintenance of particular group cultures, for example, and may be especially important for the production and reproduction of discourse. Strong ties – those between intimates, like household members or close friends – build cohesion among a group. Granovetter demonstrates that social capital is generated by both kinds of ties, though the nature of the social capital differs between the two (Granovetter 1973).

While Bourdieu, Coleman and others discuss how individuals within a group acquire and use social capital, this conception of social capital as an individual property has been contested by a variety of researchers, especially those interested in the applications of the notion to rural development. Mark Granovetter proposes a notion of social capital including the idea of embeddedness, transitioning the concept from an

exclusively individual characteristic to one that is a group property. As Granovetter points out, "...the personal experience of individuals is closely bound up with larger-scale aspects of social structure, well beyond the purview or control of particular individuals" (Granovetter 1973:1377). Integrating these perspectives more thoroughly, Flora tells us "social capital involves relationships among individuals and groups. Those relationships can vary as to the degrees of mutual trust, reciprocity, shared norms and values, common goals, and a sense of a shared future" (Flora 2004: 96).

Social capital can be thought of as an emergent property of social systems. By emergent property, I mean a characteristic of a system that is a result of the component parts or interactions among them, and yet is a property novel to the system, not existing in its component parts. As Coleman states, every social relation results in some kind of social capital being developed. Further, we can think about how layered social interactions might contribute to the overall system's capital.

Though many social capital theorists use social capital as a means by which social theory might upscale between micro and macro scales, their explanations of how this might occur lack specifics (see for example Coleman 1988 and Granovetter 1973). I find Anthony Giddens' concept of structuration useful in bridging this gap between the micro and macro of social capital. While most individual action is taken based on knowledge, and usually with particular goals in mind, knowledge is bounded – no individual is capable of understanding all of the specific ramifications of any action, especially those involving social interactions and the unpredictability of other individuals. Actions have both intended and unintended consequences, and these unintended consequences are as likely as those that are intended to impact social practice. "In general it is true that the

further removed the consequences of an act are in time and space from the original context of the act, the less likely those consequences were intended by the perpetrator of the original act, the less likely those consequences are to be intentional – but this is, of course, influenced both by the scope of the knowledgeability that actors have and the power they are able to mobilize,” (Giddens 1984:11). Unintended consequences can have quite significant, long-term effects, sometimes resulting in unintended, but no less significant, social impacts. When reflexivity is applied to these unintended consequences, the previously unintended often becomes intended, and entrenched, ideology.

The link between cultural and social capital, in part, can be found in these ‘unintended consequences’. Social action, instigated for some rational purpose, taken numerous times, leads to unintended consequences, including the development of meaning and ideology – forms of cultural capital – over time. Shared ideology can enhance the creation of social capital in that people sharing similar ideology may be attracted to the same organization or in that a shared ideology can increase the strength of social ties between individuals within an organization (or an informal group).

At some point others of these unintended consequences may be identified as desirable, as in the case of some forms of social capital. They may then integrate these consequences into their rational action, making the unintended, intended. However, it is also possible that a recognition of positive unintended consequences does not lead to a rational incorporation of those outcomes into individual action. This does not negate the existence of those unintended consequences, including social capital, though it could be

argued that intentional creation of social capital could lead to greater benefits in the form of social capital.

Finally, there is the question of the normative aspects of social capital. A number of authors have theorized that social capital can have both negative and positive effects (See for example, Putnam 2000), but few have sufficiently explored the value underpinnings of why we should care about social capital and its effects. Flora suggests that an interest in social capital, especially on the part of applied sociologists, “should include notions of equality/inequality, inclusion/exclusion, and agency/structure” (Flora 1998). Though the notion of empowerment as it relates to social capital does not address all of these issues, it does begin to elucidate how various aspects of social capital can lead to particular social justice outcomes.

Measuring the discourse of empowerment

The concept of farmer empowerment as such is most commonly addressed in the sub-fields of international development and community organizing. For example, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), hegemonic multilateral development institutions, each have developed programs with the goal of empowering farmers, as have a range of bilateral development agencies. Unsurprisingly, much of the available literature addressing farmer empowerment is produced by international development institutions, which offers important insights into the particular approaches they employ, as well as to how and why farmer empowerment is useful in achieving particular outcomes. However, these reports do not help us in theorizing farmer empowerment in a way that allows it to be applied to an examination of farmers’ agency in political realms, especially around political issues that transcend the local.

The World Bank defines farmer empowerment as follows:

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is [sic] actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. (Danida 2004)

Danida, the Danish development organization, defines farmer empowerment in a similar way:

A process that increases the capabilities of smallholder farmers and farmer group to make choices and to influence collective decisions towards desired actions and outcomes on the basis of those choices. (Danida 2004)

Though in other areas of its report on farmer empowerment initiatives, Danida recognizes that empowerment is not only a process, but also a ‘result’, empowerment as a farmer characteristic doesn’t make it into the official definition, an omission that makes the concept quite difficult to operationalize as a concept separate from its effects, i.e. the desirable ‘development’ goals outlined by these agencies, such as “poverty reduction, improved agricultural opportunities for growth, and better governance” (Danida, 2004).

A second difficulty with these definitions of farmer empowerment for solid theoretical development is that they do not specify whose desired outcomes farmer empowerment ought to be furthering. One might reasonably assume that these definitions refer to those outcomes desired by farmers themselves, however, as they are often measured for program evaluative purposes (the primary medium for the analysis of farmer empowerment) they clearly refer to the desired outcomes as outlined by the particular agency conducting the evaluation. While these sorts of evaluations are necessary for funding organizations having to justify their continued existence to a

variety of stakeholders, this is not a sufficient means of operationalizing farmer empowerment.

The final problem with these definitions of farmer empowerment is their implicit adoption of a formal rationality for farmer empowerment. The outcomes listed by these various attempts at empowerment operationalization completely exclude farmer interests that are not tied to market economies. For instance, they do include ‘access to markets’, ‘poverty reduction’, and ‘opportunities for growth’, but do not list substantively rational goals like building community, cultural maintenance, or environmental improvement, all of which are quite common goals and values expressed by farmers and their organizations, along with those economic goals acknowledged by development institutions.

In order to address these difficulties in defining and, then, operationalizing, farmer empowerment, I define farmer empowerment as the ability to take action according to a farmer’s own interests, whether at the individual or group level. Interests in this case includes both ‘selfish’ and altruistic interests, economic or substantive goals, at the individual or group level. Farmer empowerment requires access to and acquisition of 1) knowledge relevant to the farmers’ goals, 2) confidence in one’s own (or a group’s own) ability to effectively apply that knowledge and other expertise to the situation at hand and 3) the ability, including the authority, to take relevant action.

Empowerment can occur in many arenas, and in the pursuit of diverse goals, whether in community or individually. In an application that the international development organizations discussed above might be interested in evaluating, and a case that is examined in the data presented here, a farmer-oriented NGO in Peru may see a

market opportunity in newly opened markets in Europe for new horticultural products, and then take action to disseminate knowledge regarding production technologies and export regulations to small-scale farmers and organize them into a kind of cooperative for credit and marketing purposes.

Another example, demonstrating individual empowerment, may be an Iowan farmer interested in promoting the development of community in his church, and deciding to begin a small-scale Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprise, involving parishioners in his church and other community members subscribing to his small fruit and vegetable farm and receiving a ‘share’ of produce each week, as well as including a variety of work days on the farm, informal social interaction, and farmer-sponsored on-farm social activities. The ability of farmers to engage in these sorts of activities – taking advantage of new markets or developing social networks in their communities – requires knowledge, confidence, expertise, and authority, i.e. empowerment.

Farmer empowerment and social capital

Empowerment in some guise is often seen as an effect of social capital, though of course there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Often empowerment is not explicitly defined in those studies that mention it, but it is often portrayed as a property of individuals, even in those studies which take an embeddedness perspective. However, we can also imagine that empowerment could be a collective property. I attempt to capture both components in my analysis, separating expressions of individual from communal empowerment within individual and organization discourse.

One can easily imagine how discourse may or may not match other social practice in the area of empowerment. If I interview a wealthy farmer, politically connected and well-educated, and he tells me “People like me just can’t get into farming anymore. You need more and more capital, and the markets are just impossible” (a paraphrase of one of the conventional Iowa farmers included in this study). There are clear indications of dis-empowerment in this statement. The individual words ‘can’t’ and ‘impossible’ indicate barriers; the use of the term ‘people like me’ is almost a direct reference to the farmer himself. Such self-referential language is a crucial piece of an analysis of the discourse of empowerment. This is demonstrably a discourse of dis-empowerment.

However, a non-discursive analysis may reveal that this individual donated generously to various political campaigns, participated directly in drafting pieces of the national farm policy, and has made large investments into his own farm business, and may have done all of these things at much greater rates than his peers. These other pieces of data could be interpreted as direct measures of empowerment. How do we explain the seeming disparity between the farmer’s discourse and his other social actions?

There are three possible positions to take on the farmer’s discourse, one of which I believe is clearly more useful than the others for my purposes here. First, the farmer may be flatly lying, demonstrating the perils of using any kind of interviewing or individual survey work for social research. I reject this hypothesis, at least in this case. Second, perhaps the farmer doesn’t understand his position in society in relation to other people very well, and thinks that he really is powerless. This is similarly less than useful for an effective analysis, as it casts the farmer as an ignorant and powerless player. While no one is omniscient, especially as regards their relative social position, I believe

that it is important to accede that all individuals, to various degrees, maintain a degree of personal agency.

The third possibility, and the one I favor, is that the farmer is presenting a truthful, but *strategic* discourse of agriculture, in which farmers are presented as less powerful than other members of society and than farmers used to be. This discourse emerged and is created by this individual, his social group, and society as a whole – it is socially constructed. The individual farmer is, to use Giddens' term (Giddens 1984), practically conscious of why he is employing this particular discourse, but he perhaps cannot give an entire history of how it emerged, or the specific reasons he felt this way of expressing himself is appropriate in this interview situation.

The power of discourse analysis is in elucidating the link between attitudes about empowerment and action, as well as the relationship between individual or small group and social structure and ideology. An analysis of discourse is a potent precursor to the more material analysis of “what actually happened”. So, while discourse is indeed social action, it is only one kind of action and cannot be made to stand in for other kinds of action.

Environment and social capital

The concepts of social capital and empowerment have been very tightly linked to the idea of sustainability, or sustainable development, especially in the community development literature (Schofield 2002). Researchers frequently rely on the 1987 Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” (Brundtland 1987:43). This

definition addresses the essential needs of the world's poor, and the limits to humanity's ability to exploit the natural environment.

Social capital proponents assume that the three “pillars of sustainability” – social, economic, and environmental sustainability – are, or at least can be, complimentary rather than conflictual. This position hearkens back to Giddens' conception of power as something other than a zero-sum game, and clearly connects to his and others' later development of the Third Way and Ecological Modernization theories⁹. However, following the acknowledgement that social capital can have positive, negative, or mixed effects (see, for example, Schulman and Anderson 1999), recent work emphasizes that social capital can affect environmental quality (or natural capital, to maintain the capital analogy), and recognizes that social capital can have either positive or negative affects, depending on the particular context and structure of the group or community under consideration.

One of the major unresolved questions within the social capital literature is whether social capital in the United States and other industrial countries is declining. Robert Putnam famously declared it to be rapidly declining (Putnam 2000), but others have challenged that conclusion (Paxton 1999; Tarrow 1996). Some researchers have pointed especially to the “greening of social capital” to demonstrate that in some cases civic and social involvement may be shifting between different types of organizations, from traditional fraternal and voluntary organizations to environmental or recreational

⁹ See, for a description of the Third Way political theory, (Giddens,1998).

organizations. For example, Savage et al. (2005) found that in two counties in Vermont “local autonomous environmental groups have grown rapidly relative to all other types of local and non-local land-based groups...” (Savage, Isham, and McGrory Klyza 2005:128).

It is not clear what the “greening of social capital” means for agriculture. However, organizations can be critical for making positive environmental and social change within agriculture (Pretty and Ward 2001), and social capital has been implicated in this success. In the United States, and specifically in the Midwest, sustainable agriculture organizations are ubiquitous¹⁰, attracting farmers as well as consumers interested in knowing more about where their food comes from and how it is produced. At the same time, environmental and conservation organizations in rural communities attract farmer members, many of whom would not belong to a sustainable agriculture organization, and in fact use conventional agricultural practices. Furthermore, even organizations and agencies that are traditionally associated with conventional agriculture incorporate programs and discourse promoting various conservation strategies. Social networks and the complex discursive overlays that this greening entails can result in changes in social capital and its effects. For example, one of the central themes that the two Iowa farmer groups – conventional and alternative farmers – in this study discuss is hog confinements, largely framed as an environmental issue by both groups.

In Peru as well there is a distinctly green sheen to the discourse about ethics and values in agriculture. Having been identified as one of the most ecologically diverse

¹⁰ For example, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service lists forty-eight sustainable agriculture organizations located in the North Central region of the United States National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service. 2007, Retrieved April 8, 2007 (<http://attra.ncat.org/>).

countries on Earth, Peru has been the subject of environmentally-driven development and conservation efforts for decades[AF1]. Institutions as diverse as the UN Environmental Programme, the Dutch bilateral development agency, USAID, the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and the WTO have sponsored extensive projects geared toward conservation or to environmentally-conscious development, including building and protecting national parks, developing eco-tourism industries, and helping communities to preserve their agricultural diversity[AF2].

Methods

The data presented here comes from a three-phased research design. First, I identified five organizations geared to serve farmers, differing in nationality, the kind of production the target farmers are engaged in, and the scale of production. Next, key informants – farmer leaders – from each of the groups were identified and interviewed. Interviews were informal, using a question guide, and questions were open-ended, focusing on general questions about a farmer leader’s experiences, his or her opinions about ethical issues in agriculture, and agricultural policy. Finally, I collected data from each of the organizations. I interviewed some organizations’ leaders, and collected extensive literature created and disseminated by the organizations, both literature designed for farmers, and that designed for funders or the public.

I interviewed farmer leaders who were interested in talking to me. My first farmer contacts in each group were referred to me by their organization or colleagues, or, in the case of conventional Iowa farmers, Extension agents. I then followed a modified snow-ball technique, asking each individual I interviewed what other individuals they looked to as leaders within agriculture (for an overview of snow-ball sampling see

Esterberg 2002). I specifically chose not to ask for leaders within the particular organizations I was working with. I didn't specifically ask "who else is a leader in the county Farm Bureau?", but rather "who else is a leader among farmers in this area?".

I analyzed the data using critical discourse analysis techniques, employing Fairclough's three-stage approach (Fairclough 2001). The first stage of analysis requires a description of the text, in this case transcripts of interviews with farmer leaders from each of the five groups of farmers, focusing on expressions of ideology and power. The second stage of analysis is the interpretation of the relationship between the text and the particular social interaction in which it was generated, in this case the interview setting. The third stage of analysis, and the most interesting in this study, is an explanation between the interaction and the broader social context, in this case the relationship of interest is that between the interview texts and farmer organizations.

Within the texts collected from the interviews with individual farmers, I focused on the portions of the texts in which the farmer addressed issues of environmental quality, farm policy, and globalization, though in some cases I compared indications of empowerment in regard to these themes, or between other parts of the text and the parts that dealt with these themes.

In Bourdieu's terminology, this analysis is limited to the *fields* of agriculture, trade and environment (Bourdieu 1983). Markers of empowerment within the texts differed greatly between agricultural and different fields. In other words, discursive elements within discussions about family or community may have lead to very different conclusions regarding empowerment than those related to agriculture, trade and environment. For example, a farmer whom I categorize as having expressions of

significant *dis*-empowerment in regards to environmental management expressed significant empowerment in the realm of entrepreneurship.

This caveat is important for two reasons. First, all of the individuals I interviewed are seen as leaders among their peers and, given that role, it is unlikely to find that all of their discourse indicates dis-empowerment, and in fact this was not the case. The second reason to point out this difference in discourse among different themes is that it underlines the significance of these themes for these groups of farmers. If an individual expresses himself as a active decision-maker and shaper of his world in most respects, and then, when discussing agricultural policy positions himself as a victim of selfish bureaucratic interests, this demonstrates something important about that discourse.

I compared discourse addressing four components of empowerment: farmer knowledge, subject position, personal action, and collective action. The subject position indicates how the farmer discusses their own agency, either as an individual or group. Statements of opinion preceded by ‘I really think’ or ‘we strongly feel’ are examples of strong subject positions, whereas a lack of stated opinion, or opinions accompanied by discursive hedging would constitute weak subject positions.

Description of the five groups of farmers and the organizations

The five groups from which I drew my farmer leader respondents vary in several important ‘material’ characteristics. First, there are two groups from the state of Iowa in the United States, and three others from Peru. Within Peru, two groups come from the department of San Vicente de Cañete, a coastal agricultural area south of Lima, while the remaining group is located in the central highlands in Huancayo. Second, the groups differ in their scale of operation, at the extremes, conventional farmers in Iowa farm

thousands of acres, and subsistence farmers in Huancayo farm just a few acres. Third, the groups of farmers differ in what and how they produce – their product, whether commodity grain, or meat, fruit and vegetables for export, fruit and vegetables for local or self consumption – and whether their farming operations are completely mechanized, partially mechanized, use animal traction, or rely on hand labor. Finally, the various groups have very different access to capital and credit, a characteristic related to the above characteristics, but also a result of other social and economic forces determining what kind of farmer is seen to be a ‘good risk’, and farmers’ own perceptions and values about economic aspects of agriculture.

Each of the five groups of farmers from which I interviewed leaders are associated with particular farmer organizations. Like the groups of farmers, these organizations represent a range of organizational structures and purposes, which I describe in detail below.

Alternative Iowa farmers

The Iowa alternative farmer leaders that I interviewed are all members of the Iowa Network for Community Agriculture (INCA), a state-wide membership-based organization dedicated to the promotion of local and regional food systems that promote community well-being. Its mission statement is “INCA aims to promote relationships among people who are developing sustainable local food sources that are safe and healthy for people, all creatures, and the land.” Members are both farmers and non-farmers, though the emphasis of the organization’s activities is on production and marketing of agricultural products and other kinds of support for agricultural producers.

INCA farmers tend to be small-scale producers; many, though not all, are certified organic; and many are involved in integrated crop and livestock production. The farmers I interviewed all market most of their products within Iowa, and most within the community or county in which their farm is located. I interviewed both men and women, all of whom are white, non-immigrant Americans, and all of whom are at least second-generation Iowa farmers (though many do not farm the same land that their parents did).

Conventional Iowa farmers

The Iowa conventional farmers that I interviewed are all members of both the Iowa Farm Bureau (FB) and their county FB chapter, and all of them have been officers of one or both organizations. The Iowa Farm Bureau is a state-level membership-based organization. Though the organization's public image is largely focused on representing farmers' interests to legislators and other outsiders, much of the internal structure of the organization focuses on the delivery of insurance and other financial services to members (Federation 2006). I interviewed both female and male members of the Iowa Farm Bureau, all of whom are active farmers. Some respondents produce both crops and livestock, and others are only involved in crop production. Most of the Iowa Farm Bureau members I interviewed only worked on-farm, but a few also had off-farm employment, and all but one of the farmers' spouses also worked off farm.

During the 1910s, a variety of Farm Bureau community organizations were created by the new state university extension services along with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Agency and extension professionals recruited local leaders – including farmers and also others who worked in agriculturally related businesses - to organize groups of 'progressive' farmers interested in integrating new

technologies and scientific advances into their farming operation. In 1914, Iowa's first county Farm Bureau was established.

The FB adoption of a scientific and technical ideology occurred during a time of great uncertainty for Midwestern farmers. The demographic transition of the United States from a rural to an urban nation, along with a growing dependency of farmers on urban consumers and processors and the growing importance of unknown international markets and competitors made for a great disarticulation between previously adequate farming ideology and rationality based largely on agrarianism, and begged the question of what would allow farmers to remain relevant in a new modern milieu. The ideology of science and technology, with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity, extended the authority and legitimacy that science and modernism had already established in the United States to farmers, offering a means of maintaining relevance and a certain amount of power in the larger society. For example, early Farm Bureau member leaders drew on this legitimacy and authority in a variety of policy-making conflicts, e.g. in a bid to administer hog cholera vaccine themselves rather than rely on the more expensive veterinary expert administration (Berlage 2001).

The Farm Bureau has been the dominant farming organization in the United States since WWII (Mooney and Majka 1995). However, it has been criticized for its accommodating relationship with agribusiness, sometimes at the expense of serving farmers. Mooney and Majka contend that the Farm Bureau's response to the 1980s farm crisis in part exacerbated the situation. "The Farm Bureau's analytical framework could only interpret the crisis as the inevitable weeding out of poor managers, a process that was perhaps seen as unfortunate, but also as a necessary price for progress..." (p.109).

The Farm Bureau is organized hierarchically, with county level, membership-based organizations contributing to state-level and then national representative bodies. The conventional farmers interviewed for this research all belong to a county-level Farm Bureau organization, and have also held leadership position within the state organization, and some at the national organization, as well.

Small--scale Cañete farmers

The small-scale horticultural producers I interviewed in Cañete, Peru are participants in a project sponsored by the Instituto Rural de Valle Grande (Valle Grande), a local branch of an international Catholic development organization. Farmers are participants and clients rather than members, per se. The organization is funded by private donors based in Europe, but staffed by Peruvians, and sponsors many development projects in the Cañete area, including a variety of agricultural projects. I interviewed farmers who are participants in a project promoting the production of sugar snap peas for export to the United States and Europe. Valle Grande provides technical support and also offers credit to participants. During the growing season, Valle Grande also provides crop and pest technician professionals who visit each farmer and his fields on a regular basis. The peas are marketed through a cooperative sponsored by Valle Grande, and usually sold to Chilean export companies. The farmers involved in this project farm between four and fifteen hectares of land. These farmers were young men at the time of land reform in 1969, and are the first generation in their families to own this land. They grow corn (for both grain and fodder), sweet potatoes, potatoes, some cotton, and the sugar snap peas sponsored by Valle Grande. The peas are the only crop grown for export.

Large-scale Cañete farmers

The large-scale horticultural producers from Cañete, Peru that I interviewed are all members of the Estacion Experimental (EE), a local organization comprised of all of the large farmers in the region. I interviewed all five of the board members, as well as the organization director. The EE has been in existence at least since the 1950s, officially functioning as a resource for technical information for farmer-members. The EE conducts trials of various technologies in Cañete, and makes those results available to members, as well as the scientific community. The EE is especially interested in cotton, and has been involved in research regarding cotton for generations.

With one exception, the farmer members that I interviewed from the EE are all sons of former hacienda owners. They produce citrus, cotton, asparagus, and other horticultural crops. With one exception, all of the farmers produce horticultural crops for export to North America and Europe, and cotton for the national market. One farmer produced certified organic produce, and sells in specialty markets in Lima. These men are wealthy and powerful players in Cañete, and their organization not only functions as a technical resource, but also as a political resource. They meet once a week, every Thursday morning, and discuss a wide range of topics, from seed varieties to WTO proceedings, to local philanthropy. These men employ many people from the area – both professionals agronomists and field and processing workers.

Subsistence Huancayo farmers

All of the farmers I interviewed in Huancayo are participants in an applied research project exploring the potential benefits of organic compost for soil fertility. The project is conducted under the auspices of the Instituto de Producción Pequeña

Sustentable – the Institute for Small-scale Sustainable Production (IPPS) – a research institute housed at the Universidad Nacional La Molina - the national agricultural university of Peru, located in a suburb of Lima. The project is jointly managed by IPPS staff and Belgian university researchers.

Although the management of the project involves traditional university oversight, as an institution, part of IPPS's mission is to engage in participatory research with rural communities, and this requires all of their research to employ participatory methods, which dictate involvement of farmer participants in decision-making regarding the research to be conducted and how the results can be used. As regards this particular organic compost project, the seven farmer-participants interviewed have been involved in determining what sorts of soil amendment research to engage in, and attend regular meetings to discuss their results and plan future research. Communication between IPPS and the farmers is facilitated by a full-time IPPS staff member who lives near the community and has at least weekly contact with the participants.

The farmer leaders interviewed produce a variety of crops and livestock, largely for their own and their family's consumption. They grow barley, potatoes, other native Andean tubers, and forage for their animals. One family involved in the project raises dairy cows, several others raise guinea pigs, which are sold locally for special occasion meat. Although none of these individuals sell products beyond their local community, some of the farmers interviewed expressed interest in developing a market for certified organic products in the regional capital, Huancayo.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, I will present the findings from each organization and group of farmers separately and then discuss the five groups together in the following section. Each organization has a distinct discourse about social capital, as well as specific ways in which the organization interacts with farmer members. Within each group of farmers, there was surprising consistency in how they described themselves as actors, the role they attributed to their organization, and how they presented their knowledge of agricultural policy and trade patterns. The conventional Iowa farmers demonstrated the most variation in their expressions of empowerment, though even that group tended toward consistency in their discourse about themselves as actors, in the strength of their opinions (as represented by their discourse), and about their portrayal of their level of knowledge. The major diversity in this group was in their discussion of collective action.

Table 1 summarizes the five groups of farmers' discourse about their organizations, and the various components of the discourses of empowerment. The group who expressed the most empowerment was the Iowa alternative farmers, and the group who expressed the least was the small exporter group from Cañete. Farmers in these two groups differed most in the collective action component of empowerment discourse. Iowa alternative farmers talked about their strong organizations, both INCA as well as other organizations – agriculture-related and non-agriculture related. Alternative farmers also discussed how important collective action was for them. On the other hand, the small-scale Cañete farmers expressed a very weak sense of collective efficacy or empowerment. They talked about how they, as a group, were just not good at organizing themselves for mutual benefit; they relied on historical anecdotes about how the

government sponsored production cooperatives of the 1970s failed as evidence that farmers like them were not well-suited for collective action.

Group of farmers	Farmer organization	Empowerment elements of discourse			
		Knowledge of policy	Subject mode re: opinion	Personal action	Collective action
Iowa alternative farmers	Iowa Network for Community Agriculture (INCA)	Strong	Very strong	Strong	Strong
Iowa conventional farmers	Iowa Farm Bureau	Strong	Intermediate	Intermediate	Weak
Peru large exporters	Organización de los Agricultores de Cañete – Estación Experimental (Estación Experimental)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Peru small exporters	Instituto Rural Desarrollo Valle Grande (Valle Grande)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Very weak
Peru subsistence farmers	Instituto de la Producción Pequeña Sostentable	Intermediate	Strong	Strong	Strong

Table 1: Farmer group discourses of empowerment.

Among the five organizations and the farmers associated with them there was a fairly clear ordering of expressions of empowerment in farmer discourses about environmental quality, agricultural policy, and globalization. The groups who expressed the most empowerment were the alternative farmers in Iowa, the large-scale export farmers in Cañete, and the subsistence farmers in Peru; those with the least expressions of

empowerment were in the conventional Iowa farmers and the small export farmers in Peru. However, this research does not involve an experimental design, and is inductive in nature, therefore comparisons among the various groups of farmers and their organizations are presented to illustrate general ideas about social capital and empowerment, rather than to make any over-arching value judgement among the various organizations.

Organizations, social capital and empowerment

All five organizations appear to have a positive impact on the farmers they serve. While some of the organizations appear to be better at encouraging a discourse of empowerment than others, the conclusions presented here are not meant to provide a blanket condemnation of any of the organizations, in fact, quite the contrary. Though I will offer suggestions about how organizations and members/participants might better structure their relationship and the way they frame particular issues to consciously encourage farmer empowerment, I believe that even if these organizations remain exactly as they are, they will provide important services and opportunities for farmers, and farmers' empowerment is probably significantly enhanced by their participation in these organizations as presently constituted.

INCA

The formal discourse of INCA, taken from their website, newsletters, and annual meeting materials, depicts the organization as a community. The mission statement explicitly values networks and trust: "INCA aims to promote relationships among people who are developing sustainable local food sources that are safe and healthy for people, all creatures, and the land." '[R]elationships among people' explicitly references building

social capital, an organizational discourse that gives official emphasis to the networking component of social capital, and implies an organizational value and effort toward those ends. ‘[S]afe and healthy’ also references aspects of social capital, though these are outwardly focused. We see a reference to reduced risk to consumers in ‘safe’, a word that links this discourse to the vast safety and risk discourse of late modernity, and at the same time acknowledges one of the strongest objections to locally produced small-scale food products from the conventional food science community and general public – that there is increased risk in non-industrial food products. ‘[H]ealthy’, on the other hand, counters these same arguments against local food by focusing on the quality attributes of food produced locally, linking to a more recent discourse about quality and health of food. Not only will this food not make you ill (‘safe’) but they will add to your overall well-being (‘healthy’). Consumers and other community members can trust this organization.

The environmental discourse is apparent in this mission statement in the words ‘sustainable’, ‘all creatures’, and ‘the land’. ‘[S]ustainable’ and ‘the land’ are fairly typical of mainstream conservation movements, especially among land-based groups (i.e. farmers, landowners, hunters, etc.). However, the addition of ‘all creatures’ links this discourse to discourses of animal welfare, and implicitly addresses one of the most contentious issues in Iowa agriculture, large-scale confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). While livestock agriculture is often discussed in terms of the impact of the operation on water and air quality, with advocates arguing about whether or not there are negative effects, and how those impacts ought to be weighed against the benefits of these operations, it is only a specific sub-set of anti-CAFO discourse that engages an animal

welfare component. Given its Iowa context, INCA then is making a strong statement about its ideology by including ‘all creatures’ in its mission statement.

The mission statement is typical of the rest of the organization’s official discourse. Community, networking, partnerships, and ‘building bridges’ are frequently mentioned throughout the secondary materials I collected from INCA, and land ethic and animal welfare discourse elements are also common. That these issues are specifically integrated into a mission statement and other official documents gives them added force in influencing other social practice within organizational members.

The organizational structure of INCA is designed to involve members in decision-making. Most meetings are informal, with all attendees participating in discussions and decision-making. Most interaction occurs at the annual meeting, at farmer field days, or over an email listserve, venues which are less geared to taking official action and more toward building relationships and increasing networks. INCA is one of only two organizations in the study, besides IPPS, whose official discourse and structure are geared toward building community and networking for their own sakes, rather than toward some other ends.

Alternative Iowa farmer respondents characterize INCA as a community of sustainable farmers and allies. They describe the organization as a resource for both information and support. The farmers I talked with indicated that they value the organization because it offers a place where they can share their world view with other people – they see their own worldview as very different from that of conventional farmers and the general public. They set themselves and their organization apart as “sustainable” or “alternative” or “organic”.

One farmer indicated how central INCA was to his experience as an alternative farmer, and how it functioned more as a community than merely as a source for information.

“Oh, I think, with INCA, most of the members of INCA, and they don’t have to be farmers, either, but the central quality is the need for community in their lives. So, it’s not just talk about the issues, there’s concern about the relationships in the organization, and relating to one another. Uh, and I think that stems from, you know, concern about the community – the soil-life community, nature, and, and the broader community, so that’s all interrelated.”

This quote captures many of the characteristics of this group’s discourse about their organization. Community is a very strong theme in their responses. Much of this group’s discourse links nature with human communities, and also explicitly draws parallels between themselves and other members of their organization. In Peru, I found only the subsistence farmers from Huancayo and the small-scale exporters from Cañete doing the same thing, though the small-scale exporters drew parallels largely to highlight negative qualities among farmers they characterized as like themselves. Iowa alternative farmers’ discourse about their organization is consistent with the organization’s own official discourse.

The alternative farmer leaders I interviewed mentioned several organizations and institutions in their interviews. INCA and another organization called Practical Farmers of Iowa were most often mentioned, as the biggest alternative/sustainable agriculture organizations in the state. However, farmers also mentioned churches, peace organizations, and farmers’ markets as institutional expressions of their collective action. Leaders identified themselves as members of these institutions, and the institutions were actors in respondents’ discourse. In the case of churches, the action was collecting and

donating produce to a food pantry, and alternative farmer leaders characterize peace organizations as building solidarity with farmers in other parts of the world; the same farmers portray farmers' markets as places and organizations dedicated to educating people about alternative food systems, and as providing examples of how other community members can take action toward those same goals. Farmers' markets were notably *not* characterized as primarily places of economic exchanges by any of the farmers, though for some of them farmers' markets formed a major portion of their sales.

Leaders interviewed from the Iowa alternative group expressed high levels of empowerment along all four axes – knowledge, opinion, individual and collective action. Compared to the other groups, the alternative farmers' expressed especially strong opinions about agricultural policy and trade, and articulated a strategy of collective action to a much greater extent than did the other groups.

One woman told me, referring to the current Farm Bill, “[T]hose policies are growing out of assumptions that are no longer rooted in these values of community health...” A male respondent, when talking about his interaction with small farmers in Latin America, said “...I don't believe that NAFTA or CAFTA, uh, as it's written anyway, that's not helping farmers at all. It's not helping farmers here, either.” Though in some ways their statements are very different (e.g. the first stated without an active subject, the second with the speaker as subject), both farmers are emphasizing community in their critiques of existing policies.

Iowa Farm Bureau

The Iowa Farm Bureau organizational discourse focuses on agricultural issues. The organization has an extensive staff, and produces a great deal of literature from

technical reports to news releases and opinion pieces. Quite consistently throughout the large body of secondary texts I looked at for this study, little mention is made of FB membership as a community, whether community is depicted either as a goal, as INCA discussed community in their mission statement, or even merely the existence of community whether intentionally created or not. The emphasis in official FB discourse is on the organization as a conduit of information about agriculture to the larger public, and to legislators and agency professionals in particular. There is also not much mention of anything that explicitly values trust or reciprocity in the official literature.

The American Farm Bureau is a federation of state-level organizations, each of which is relatively independent. The Iowa Farm Bureau is composed of county level organizations, each of which elects a full slate of officers, and sends representatives to the state conventions. The state, in turn, sends representatives to the national Farm Bureau convention. Most of the conventional Iowa farmers that I interviewed are involved in the same county level Farm Bureau organization.

The farmers that referred to the organization within the interviews most often mentioned it in terms of representing agriculture to people not directly involved in agriculture – whether it be to school children, legislators, or state fair goers. Farmers also mentioned that the FB needed to combat animal rights activists. This group was the only one of the five to state that part of the organization’s function is the creation and deployment of strategic discourse to outsiders on behalf of the farmers.

Iowa conventional farmers mentioned other organizations. Commodity groups such as the Soybean Growers, the Corn Growers Association, and the Pork Producers, were mentioned as important to some of the respondents. Several of the respondents

from this group also mentioned a watershed conservation organization. In some cases, these other organizations were more important for the respondent's personal involvement than was the FB, although all had held office in the latter organization.

Conventional Iowa farmer leaders demonstrated an intermediate level of empowerment. Their presented level of knowledge was intermediate about international trade in general, though they talked extensively about specific U.S. agricultural policies. This group's strength of opinion, as reflected by their subject modality, was intermediate – and ambivalent, though they expressed stronger opinions about more specific, national policies (e.g. the Conservation Security Program, commodity payments, etc.). This group's expression of their ability to take action at a personal level was also intermediate, with substantial variation among the discourse of the six farmer leaders I interviewed.

One farmer talked about deciding to “go back” to raising livestock in order to make more profit with limited land. Another farmer spoke proudly of how he managed his farm like a business, and described many successful business deals and expansions that he undertook in the last 15 years. However, several of the other farmers did not mention action they themselves were engaged in to address any specific challenges. In part, I think this reflects the largely undifferentiated nature of Iowa conventional agriculture. All of the six farmers I interviewed in this group – clearly the leaders in their county – all grow corn and soy on their land. One also produces cattle, and two raise hogs in confinement facilities. This level of diversity of crops and livestock produced is dramatically limited compared to the other four groups of farmers, and is not well-suited to individuals making major innovations, or of making different choices than their neighbors, thereby limiting empowerment.

The conventional Iowa farmers' discourse about communal action was also quite complicated – more so than any of the other four groups. They expressed generally empowered ideas about the United States, and Iowa, competing in the global agricultural marketplace, but didn't mention communal actions, or the possibility thereof, at the level of their organization, or of farmers in general. The exception was when farmers talk about other organizations. For instance, one respondent was a leader in the Soybean Association (SBA), and he talked extensively about the actions the SBA took to take advantage of new markets in Japan and how the organization was looking for ways to promote soy as an alternative fuel. Two other farmers are involved in a watershed-level conservation organization, and describe that group's work to reduce run-off and improve habitat along the stream.

Valle Grande

Farmers mentioned Valle Grande (VG) in context of receiving assistance and training, specifically describing the aid they received from VG technicians. Valle Grande is portrayed as a source of “support”, as a stand-in for the government. For example, one small-scale export farmer, when asked about how he felt about international trade, told me:

I said to the Valle Grande engineers, I would like for you to explain to me, what is the Free Trade Agreement? Us farmers are not well-informed about this, we don't know if it would be good or bad. We'll see...up to now there's been nothing...Maybe we're wrong, we need to educate ourselves.

Other farmers talked extensively about VG's technicians telling them when it was a good time to apply chemicals, or helping them access credit. Valle Grande was often depicted as the ‘good guy’, in contrast to the government as the ‘bad guy’ in their

respective support for small farmers. The small exporters mentioned the marketing cooperative they used to market their peas. Small-scale farmers associated with VG didn't mention any other agriculture-related organizations without specific questioning. All of them were, however, also members of their local irrigation committee, which, meeting on a regular basis to resolve conflict over access to irrigation water and plan work, functions as a governing.

The small-scale exporters expressed low levels of empowerment along all three axes. They portrayed themselves as ignorant of international trends and policies, and they didn't express a strong opinion. Personal action was weak. However, they expressed some communal action, largely action taken on their behalf by their organization in creating a loose cooperative to market their sugar snap peas.

Estación Experimental

The official documents produced by the Association of Farmers of Cañete Experiment Station – the Estación Experimental – are quite limited, and those that exist are tightly controlled by the director of the station and the board members. For example, though a newsletter was mentioned when I interviewed the director, he was not comfortable with my making a copy of the document. However, he did offer several technical bulletins, focused on informing farmers about some of the research taking place at the Station regarding pest control. Especially in dealing with this organization and the farmers associated with it, there was the sense that security in general was important.

The official documents from the EE that I was able to obtain directly from the staff, as well as those reports I found on-line that are jointly written with various other institutional partners, depict the organization as a body of technicians, concerned largely

with production challenges – like pest management and choice of inputs like seed variety and fertilizer. There is no explicit mention in the official documents that I had access to of networking or building community or relationships among the farmer members. However, by virtue of the fact that the EE produced many of these reports with input or sponsorship from other institutions, there is an implicit endorsement of these kinds of institutional cooperative projects.

The farmers who serve as the Board of Directors of the Association of the Producers of Cañete and its Estación Experimental didn't mention their organization very often. One of the few extensive quotes about the organization was from a former president. He was describing how the organization came to be founded, and its current purpose.

I've been president of the Association of the Producers of Cañete and of the Producers of Citrus. When there are problems the farmers go and knock on the door of the Association, I have this testimony from my father's era – he's 80 years old. He said in the time of agrarian reform when they went to expropriate the lands, they all agreed that there would be an association of farmers that could help them, when there are problems only then they would go to the Association. Seeing the defects and differences in our neighbor does not unite us with him, and we're not seeing things on common. In a country where the agriculture is so atomized it is necessary to participate in organization, in guilds.

The farmers that this respondent is referring to are hacienda owners, those who lost some of their land during the land reform in 1969. Although there is documentation of the Association and the Experiment Station existing in the 1950s, land reform gave a new purpose to the EE.

This quote typifies how the Association members characterize the organization. It is a problem-solving tool, usually only used in times of trouble. Though this is consistent with the organization's official discourse, the Board, including all of the farmers I

interviewed, meets every Thursday morning to discuss issues of general concern. The role of the Association as a counter to the government is also noteworthy. Also of note, land reform continues to be a central component in this farmer's explanation of himself and his organization an entire generation and 37 years after the fact.

The inclusion of the "defects and differences" sentence among this farmer's explanation of the organization's purpose also indicates some of the kinds of problems that the organization addressed in the past. While building community, or strengthening identity is not explicitly contained in the organization's official discourse (at least those texts that I examined), the organization is clearly seen as a peace-maker and as a place to build a common voice for farmers in Cañete. Also crucial to note is that the farmers typically included in the EE's activities and concerns are the larger, wealthier farmers, while smaller farmers tend to rely on organizations like VG or perhaps product organizations.

Another Board member does not mention the EE, but talks about his involvement in a collaborative project with a commodity group – the Citrus Producers – and the Peruvian government agricultural regulating body – SENASA. The farmer portrays the project as a step toward expanding certified organic production in the Cañete Valley.

"...[T]he Citrus Producers association is helping indirectly in an agreement with SENASA (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Agraria del Perú). They are helping by introducing beneficial insects to control this mite and this scale [citrus pests] that cause us problems. Then they do this not thinking of the organic producer, without the integrated management of the crop it would be better and less costly for the farmer and it would increase the percent that's exportable. They are helping us for in the future we will have options for organic management."

Other respondents mention the Grape Growers association, the Cotton Growers, and the various export companies and input suppliers they work with.

This group of farmers demonstrate strong levels of empowerment along all three dimensions – characterization and indication of their knowledge about policy and trade, having an opinion about the current situation and how the future should look, and portraying themselves as taking action toward adjusting to or taking advantage of the current and future situation. First, all five EE Board members demonstrated knowledge of specific trends in agricultural trade and policy relevant to their operations and indicated that they felt themselves well-informed about the topic. Second, the large export farmers all had strong, nuanced opinions about these trends. Only one of the five was unhesitatingly in favor of all things “free trade”, though he discussed how other people might not share those feelings. The others all mentioned that there were positives and negatives associated with free trade, and all were quick to point out that Peruvian exporters have to compete with agriculture that is heavily subsidized in North America, Europe, and Japan. I have characterized this group’s opinions as “strong” because, although they saw both benefits and costs associated with globalization trends, they had very specific ideas about how agricultural policy ought to change to better take advantage of potential benefits for themselves and the country of Peru.

Finally, all five farmers in the large exporter group demonstrated strong empowerment in the action component, both personal and communal. All of the men described specific changes in their operations that they had made in response to changing markets and regulations. They discussed opportunities they saw for future expansion in their various products, and they also identified ways they were testing new management

or marketing ideas. Further, while, as mentioned above, only one spoke extensively about the EE, the respondents did make statements that indicated they were approaching these issues from a communal as well as personal perspective. For this group, indications of communal action incorporated action taken by the organization, by other organizations they were a member of, by government agencies that they identified with, and by a general “we”, seeming to reference “we as export farmers”.

IPPS

The mission statement of IPPS specifically references ‘participatory methods’, an explicit inclusion of the farmer-leaders I interviewed into the decision-making of the organization at the project level.

We are a specialized organization to develop research-action and proposals of policies through interdisciplinary focus and through participative methodologies to generate changes in favor of the development of the small sustainable production.

The initial impetus for the IPPS-sponsored organic soil amendment project that this group of farmers were involved in came from two Belgian scientists, and the funding for the research is provided by the Belgian government. However, because IPPS’s formal decision-making structure requires that all of IPPS-sponsored research be participatory, farmers at the local level were included from a very early stage of planning for this project.

The discourse of the farmer leaders I interviewed in this group demonstrated fairly strong empowerment. Typical of these respondents’ statement of their own opinions, one farmer, in response to a question a preferred future for national agricultural policy, told me:

It's my personal opinion that the state's policy should promote and support organic agriculture, organic products would be promoted in outside the country, that the products are healthy and they don't have carcinogens, then this product has higher value. That is what I would do. Because if not, now you don't have any possibility to compete.

The strong subject position in this quote, as demonstrated by 'It's my personal opinion', and 'what I would do', indicates a confidence in this individual's own ability to state an informed opinion, as well as an acceptance that this authority to have an opinion will be accepted by the outside, including by me as an interviewer.

Peasant farmers also expressed fairly strong knowledge about trade and policy, talked about actions and decisions they themselves take toward their own goals, in striking contrast to the small-scale farmers from Cañete, and also talk about the group's actions as a whole.

What can we learn about organizations and farmer empowerment?

Even beyond what they produce and how they produce it (e.g. using conventional versus sustainable management practices), farmers are not monolithic. These five groups of farmers and their associated organizations illustrate several important patterns. The overarching conclusion we can draw is that while 'material' concerns (like what, where, and using what methods farmers produce crops) certainly influence farmer discourse (see the preceding two chapters), organizational and institutional environment also has a great deal of impact on farmers' discourse, and thereby, on their conception of what is possible for them and for people like them (i.e. empowerment). Organizations influence discourse through both official discourse, but also through formal decision-making structures, and informal interactions.

Structure of the organization

First, the structure of the organization is a critical predictor of farmer empowerment. How an individual farmer is involved in the organization seems to matter in expressions of empowerment. I see this as a piece of the reciprocity component of social capital. Part of this structural question is about how the organization makes decisions. However, it goes beyond whether or not the organization is “top down” or “democratic”. The Iowa Farm Bureau, the organization associated with the somewhat weakly empowered conventional Iowa farmers, has a representative democratic decision-making structure, from the county to the national level. However, the farmers associated with this organization express less empowerment than do some of the other groups, *even though* they have access to what might be seen as the best range of resources – human, financial, built, and natural capitals– of all the groups of farmers.

The IPPS, on the other hand, is not an officially democratic organization, farmer participation in the organic compost project is required by the institution’s charter, but there is no formal decision-making structure. However, this group of subsistence farmers expressed relatively strong levels of empowerment, stronger than the conventional Iowa group. Why this difference?

Incorporation of meaningful participation in decision-making by all members/participants seems to be critical. By ‘meaningful participation’, I mean participation where an individual’s involvement can be seen by that individual to have a direct impact on what the organization does as a group. The two organizations mentioned above demonstrate the most extreme ends of the organizational structure spectrum in this study. The IPPS group is a relatively small group of farmers who know each other well, in various contexts. The organization facilitates meetings on a regular

basis, at which all participants are asked to give input. Partly this is because the ongoing research project sponsored by IPPS requires continued access to farmer land and participation for its continued survival, but it also is a result of the institutional requirement that all IPPS research be participatory.

The five organizations included in this analysis vary dramatically in how they are structured. However, it seems that the most important characteristic correlated with farmers' expression of empowerment or dis-empowerment is how farmers are incorporated in the decision-making of the organization. Incorporation of real participation in decision-making by all members or participants seems to be critical in providing the context for expressions of empowerment around the particular issues that an organization is concerned with.

Non-farmers

Looking at the five groups of farmers presented above, there is not necessarily a disadvantage, in terms of empowering farmers, in having non-farmers involved in a farmer organization. Two of the three groups who expressed more empowerment, INCA (the alternative Iowa organization) and IPPS (the Peruvian subsistence organization), involve extensive participation by non-farmers. INCA actively seeks to have members who are "consumers", and IPPS is a research institution whose members are academics from several countries who work with subsistence farmers and their communities. While it seems to be possible to successfully incorporate non-farmer members, it does not seem to be critical, as the group of large-scale exporters from Cañete demonstrate. Their organization, the Estación Experimental, seems to encourage discourses of empowerment though its members are strictly limited to farmers.

The difference between the two organizations that incorporated non-farmer member/participants and also encouraged farmer discourses of empowerment and Valle Grande, another organization that included non-farmer professionals, seems to be in the relative level of responsibility of the two kinds of participants – farmer and non-farmer. In VG, staff members are responsible for almost all decision-making, service procurement, and have access to most of the resources that are valued in both organizational and farmer discourse (e.g. technological knowledge, access to credit, access to foreign sources of funding, etc.). Farmers willingly, and gratefully, accept various kinds of assistance from VG, but there is not a well-developed discourse of farmers being critical partners with staff people in the success of the organization, and no farmer responsibility for decision-making. This indicates a lower level of reciprocity than in the organizations in which farmer members had critical, creative, and responsible roles to play.

Trust

At this point, it behooves me to mention the concept of trust, a central component of the definition of social capital that I am using. Valle Grande and the small-scale exporters is a good example of how it seems, according to the data presented here, trust and empowerment are related. The farmers associated with VG very clearly demonstrated trust in VG staff and the organization as a whole. Farmers shared personal information with VG staff, including financial information. They also allowed VG staff into their homes, and were willing to take time to speak with me because I was accompanied by my assistant, a former VG staff member. Valle Grande staff, for their part, also demonstrated trust in the farmers they were working with. Trust among

members and participants by itself, without the social capital component of reciprocity, is insufficient for engendering empowerment.

In the case of VG, it may be that the top-down method of delivering information and services negates the empowering effects of the trust between farmers and the organization. As Abom (2004) found in Guatemala, northern-funded NGOs can have quite negative effects on the generation of social capital within a community when these organizations have a top-down decision-making structure and focus exclusively on individual or family level goals (Abom 2004). Abom warns that such NGOs “wielding such resources and power...must take responsibility for the effects they have on social processes among the people they serve...and be aware that their actions may serve (wittingly or not) to reinforce neo-liberal global agendas” (351).

Historical and political context

General disempowerment has inertia, as does general empowerment. The five organizations presented here are embedded in a historical and political context that has important implications for farmer empowerment. Large farmers in Cañete, Peru inherited their wealth, much of their land, and also, much of their local power and confidence from their parents, former hacienda owners. Small farmers in Cañete, though a generation removed from land reform, similarly inherited some of the challenges that still face them – discrimination based on ethnicity, little access to capital, and a family history of having worked for larger farmers on the former haciendas. In Iowa, too, historical, and especially political, context is part of why the two groups of farmers are so different in their expressions of empowerment. Current agricultural policy in the U.S. favors commodity production over diversified agriculture, making the conventional Iowa

farmers much more dependent on the policy environment, and perhaps more wedded to the current policy condition, at least in general.

It is not clear to me from the data presented here how being more tied to the current policy might make farmers less empowered, though risk aversion may be part of the picture. This is an area that could benefit from further research. A comparison between conventional U.S. commodity farmers with diversified farmers that are supported by status quo policy would be informative, for example in Europe where the CAP has some provisions that encourage smaller scale, more diversified production than does the U.S. policy.

Face to face interaction

The two groups that expressed the least empowerment were the conventional Iowa farmers and the small-scale export farmers from Cañete. The organizations associated with these groups engage in less group-wide, face-to-face, give-and-take interaction than the other organizations. Valle Grande, for example, only hosts occasional workshops at their Cañete facilities in which all of the farmers participating in the snap pea project would participate, and those workshops may or may not be interactive, and usually are quite limited in scope, addressing, for instance, a specific pest management technique, or export regulation.

Face to face interaction seems to not necessarily be place-specific, though proximity of course facilitates interaction. Many of the alternative Iowa farmers are separated by several hundred miles from their fellow INCA members. However, they maintain contact via internet list serves – electronic mail interactions that involve many people, in this case any INCA member that wants to sign up for the service. There is also

extensive interaction among members at the weekend long annual meeting, and at several field days throughout the summer.

Some small group experiments have demonstrated that individuals in groups that have been allowed even limited face-to-face communication have a much stronger collective identity than those groups that do not have the option for communication. "...[I]n discussion, people immediately start discussing what 'we' should do..." Citing Robyn Dawes, et al., Miller (Miller 1992/: 33) states: "Cooperative behavior does occur without discussion and group identity, but, with no discussion, egoistic motives explain cooperation; with discussion, group identity ... explains its dramatic increase."

Miller goes on to attribute this difference in rationality – group-oriented in the case of those who were able to talk to each other and self-interested in the case of those who were not allowed to communicate – to the formation of collective identity. Miller further contends that "communal ties are generally...strongest when the opportunity exists for local interaction". It may be that this collective identity is important for empowerment, or at least for creating a discourse of empowerment.

Human capital

Though the five groups of farmers varied dramatically in their level of formal education, there doesn't seem to be a direct relationship between number of years or level of education with level of empowerment. For example, most of the Iowa conventional farmers I interviewed have at least a bachelor's degree, usually received from one of the Midwest Land Grant universities, with a specialty in an agriculture related field. However, those same farmers demonstrated less empowerment than some of the other groups. Large scale export farmers in Cañete, having similar level of education also

generally in an agricultural field, demonstrated very strong levels of empowerment. The least educated group – the subsistence farmers in Huancayo – expressed strong empowerment, though they did present their level of knowledge as uncertain.

This lack of relationship to human capital contradicts theories of social capital asserting that it ought to vary positively with human capital (very often measured as level of education). The analysis presented here does not illuminate why there was not the expected relationship among these groups of farmers, but there are several possibilities. First, it is possible that the mere level of formal education does not capture the most salient kinds of human capital necessary to initiate the kinds of actions that may be empowering. For example, many of the alternative Iowa farmers had educational backgrounds in fields less directly related to agriculture, like ecology and religion. Perhaps along with the degree, those who studied agriculture also adopted a set of beliefs about agriculture that did not support farmer empowerment. On the other hand, those who studied other fields may have brought something additional to their farming that was not available to those who studied agriculture. Another complication to the relationship between discourses of empowerment and level of education is that the respondents I chose to interview were leaders within their groups. The characteristics that lead to their being perceived as leaders by their peers as well as outsiders may mask the effects of education in the context of a relatively short interview.

Conclusion

Organizational theorists, Fred Kofman and Peter Senge, of MIT's Society for Organizational Learning, note the importance of language in shaping how organizations see themselves and the systems they are involved in (Kofman and Senge 1993).

Language, they contend, has a 'generative role' in creating the structures and practice of an organization. The authors warn against language originally employed to capture reality – i.e. communicative language, to use Bourdieu's term – becoming entrenched and leading to an organization that cannot adapt to a changing context.

A learning organization – one best able to adapt to a changing context and needs – is aware of its use of language, that "process and content are inseparable" – i.e. they are reflexive, to call on Giddens' terminology – is committed to interacting with each of its members as a unique individual, with the ability to contribute unique and valuable insights, and conceives of issues using systems thinking.

However, habitus – the attitudes, worldview and strategies that individuals (and groups) use in their social interactions – is, by definition, relatively stable and unchanging (Bourdieu 1990). In fact, this characteristic of habitus is necessary for farmer organizations to maintain a shared identity and organizational integrity over time. Farmer groups most able to integrate an appreciation for community-building, inclusiveness, and diversity into their habitus will be best able to become the ideal organizations described above.

The organizations in this study most closely paralleling Kofman's and Senge's ideal organization were INCA and IPPS, both involved in 'sustainable agriculture', and both among the three most empowered groups in the study. Flora (Flora 1995) also finds a link between sustainable agriculture organizations, social capital, and empowerment. In a study of four Midwestern communities over five years, she found that the communities with a large proportion of members of the statewide sustainable agriculture organization demonstrated faster growing social capital.

[C]ommunity citizens and farmers [in the communities with more sustainable agriculture organization members] both begin to see that their action – collective for communities and individual or household for farms – can make a difference in achieving goals. The farmer and the community no longer define themselves as victims, dependent on the whims of big government, outside industry, and the weather (Flora 1995:244).

Flora speculates that it is not the specific practices of sustainable agriculture that are responsible, but the openness to “symbolic diversity”. Social capital is built because sustainable agriculturalists, in their discussion and implementation of ideas and practices new to themselves and the community, enhance “interactions within the community which foster problem identification and the consideration of alternatives, and provide feedback to the implementation of solutions” (Flora 1995:229).

Bell et al. (Bell 2004) discovered a similar phenomenon in the different ways that men involved in conventional agriculture versus sustainable agriculture interact with the world. Sustainable farmers demonstrate ‘dialogic masculinity’, an identity that relies more in communication and diversity than conventional farmers’ ‘monologic masculinity’. One group of farmers incorporated ideologies of openness, community, and an appreciation for diverse ways of looking at the world into their habitus.

The relationship between social capital, discourse, ideology, and empowerment is complex. However, we can conclude from the preceding that organizational structure and discourse have an important effect on farmer discourses of empowerment, influencing how farmers see themselves as capable and inspired actors in a quickly changing policy and trade environment. The more fundamentally and meaningfully farmers are involved in their organizations – the

more reciprocal the relationship between farmer and organization, individual and group – the stronger their expression of empowerment will be.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this brief conclusion, I will summarize the findings of the overall study, explore some of the theoretical sticking points that they raise, briefly discuss the difficulties I faced in conducting this dissertation, and finally present two of the normative outgrowths of the study. One of the critical points to take away from this work is how complex are farmer discourses and ideologies, and how specific. Each of the five groups of farmers I studied presented discourses about economic globalization and agricultural policy that were distinct from those of the other groups, with differences between the five bodies of discourses being much more significant than those between specific texts within one body.

It behooves us as researchers interested in farmers and agriculture to make these distinctions among different groups of farmers, both in designing our own research but also in applying existing research to new situations. Farmers experience, interpret, and present 'reality' very differently, depending on national/cultural context, political and power location, and agro-ecological conditions. Further, ideology interacts with context in ways that are not always predictable but are quite powerful.

The corollary of this finding is that there is, indeed, an identifiable, internally coherent discourse that can be identified for each of these five groups of farmers. Future research might consider what the smallest unit of farmers required to show a cohesive discourse, and what might determine that. I suspect that it is the relative difference in the combination of these contextual characteristics, a hunch supported by the Peruvian data.

Self-defeating discourse?

Throughout this dissertation I've assumed that individuals, at least in part, actively chose the discourse they employed. This begs the question of why farmers employ seemingly self-defeating discourse. And what, then, are the effects of these discourses? For example, in Chapter 2, I describe conventional Iowa farmers' ideology of production. Taken to its logical conclusion, thousands of Iowa corn farmers all prioritizing yield leads to over-production, and lower prices, and fewer profits for corn farmers, and further ceding power within the corn value chain to processors and supermarket chains, as indeed has occurred. There is no doubt a great many influences other than farmers' discourse and ideology are at play in these trends in American agriculture, however, it would also not do to underestimate the importance of farmers' own roles in conventional agriculture. The *parceleros* of Cañete also have a self-defeating discourse, as outlined in Chapter 3. They consistently portray themselves as ignorant and impotent in the face of a powerful government and competitors, further contributing to the maintenance of these differential power relationships.

In addition to the negative impacts for these groups in particular, these same discourse elements have negative consequences for the respective national societies as a whole. The conventional Iowa production discourse helps to maintain the situation of externalizing environmental costs of that production (e.g. to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico) and health impacts of over-reliance on corn sweeteners. The *parcelero* discourse of ignorance maintains racist attitudes and practices against *parceleros* and others of indigenous or mixed descent within Peruvian society. However, even ignoring the benefits individuals receive through identity maintenance, these discourse elements

also have potential economic and material benefits. For example, in addition to contributing to lower prices, conventional Iowa farmer discourse regarding production helps to maintain the various food and feed --and increasingly, fuel- - industries, thereby maintaining the conventional farmers' market. The *parceleros'* discourse positions them to receive the very real material benefits of being clients of a well-funded, but paternalistic, development NGO, whose mission is to help the needy and under-privileged. These benefits are more immediate and perhaps more tangible than the diffuse social liabilities of these discourse elements. Are these benefits worth ceding one's own view of the world to someone else's vision – whether food processors or NGOs?

We can't answer that question by only examining discourse data. However, I think it is reasonable to see the potential liabilities of these particular discourses as outweighing the benefits. To reconcile this with the reality of farmer discourse, we must consider the robust, enduring nature of ideology. As I discussed in Chapter 4, ideology and discourse that stems from it can be considered aspects of culture, following Bourdieu's (1986) definition.. Both the power and the liability of ideology is in its deep-seated nature, the way that it informs and sometimes distorts our 'commonsense'. It becomes a shorthand method for decision-making, i.e. we are comfortable taking an action with little reflection if it seems to be consistent with our ideology, without our having to expend time and energy examining all of the various implications of the action. This saving of energy and time is the benefit. The liability is, of course, that in not examining those implications we risk perpetuating negative unintended consequences. To return to Giddens, these negative unintended consequences, resulting from ideology

indiscriminately applied, can be integrated into social structures (Giddens 1984), resulting in institutionalized, and therefore concretized, environmental destruction, obesity, racism, etc.

Difficulties in the study

I encountered many challenges in conducting this study. I designed an ambitious project, and, while there are things I would change if I were to conduct a similar study in the future, I think one can draw useful methodological insights from this study.

In designing the study, and then in analyzing my data, the major difficulty was in conceptualizing the texts I would analyze. I examined many studies employing critical discourse analysis, and discovered none that used direct interview transcripts for their primary data, nor did I discover much in the way of discussion of why this is the case. From my experience, the major advantage of using interviews for texts is that one can identify the specific individuals one wants to study, and can focus the interview on specific issues. In the case of this study, I wanted to analyze texts taken from local and regional leaders in agriculture, individuals who are not necessarily engaged in producing the more commonly analyzed texts – giving formal speeches, writing published statements, etc. Interviewing these individuals was the only way of attaining a relevant text.

The other side of the coin of using interview transcripts as texts is that the discourse is less intentional than that of more prepared texts. This results in slightly unwieldy language – none of the nicely polished sound bytes of politicians. But the more serious issue is in conceptualizing the strategic nature of discourse. Formal texts are usually prepared in order to influence a particular audience. Political candidates attempt

to win votes, military generals motivate their troops, corporate advertising lures consumers. Though the my respondents may have been interested in convincing me of their point of view, or at least of being perceived well in my eyes, their opportunity for predetermination and planning was not nearly as great as that of creators of formal texts have. While this limits their ability to act strategically, it also allows a degree of spontaneity, which I think may have lead to responses with deeper significance than planned responses. Our interaction was much less goal-oriented than the above examples, with less meaningful consequences for the speaker. I've considered this difficulty in my analysis, and have therefore focused more on underlying ideology than on short-term strategy, but it remains an issue, nonetheless.

Data collection also presented some challenges. Interviews with individual farmers were fairly straightforward, only limited by farmers' availability. However, I had originally conceived of a second stage of data collection in which I would conduct focus groups with each of the five groups of farmers, during which we would discuss the ideology and discourse of the other four groups of farmers. I was able to conduct two focus groups, with the *parceleros* and peasant farmers in Peru, but they occurred early in my analysis process, and proved difficult to analyze. Because of the number of people, and the format of the focus group, they devolved into largely a question and answer session, without the interaction that makes a focus group especially useful. Having now completed my initial analysis of the farmer interviews, I think this second stage of data collection may be more useful, to farmer respondents and for me.

Normative implications

There seems little point in expending as much energy as a study like this takes without coming to any conclusions regarding social praxis. Although this dissertation relies heavily on more esoteric social theory than many 'applied' rural studies, I think there are insights that can be applied in 1) farmer empowerment, and 2) sustainability within agriculture. Farmer empowerment has obvious benefits for farmers, while the benefits of sustainability (as I am discussing it here) accrue to society as a whole.

Farmer empowerment

As I discuss in Chapter 4, organizations are critical sites for farmer empowerment. As enduring institutions, organizations also offer advantages for consciously shaping discourses of empowerment. Organizations that spend time and effort on the internal processes of participatory discourse formation will reap greater benefits for farmers than those that are exclusively focused on external communication, or on service delivery. As I hope the preceding chapters have demonstrated, the advent of 'globalization' poses significant challenges to farmers, one of which is ideological disarticulation. This mismatch between historical ideologies and current realities requires that farmers create new discourses, and that ideology be transformed to accommodate those discourses (and vice versa).

Farmers who view themselves as knowledgeable, capable social actors are much better prepared to shape that new discourse in ways that benefit them as farmers, and that are consistent with their values. This discourse formation will also benefit from a *conscious* effort at its creation, and examination of its implications, so as to reduce negative unintended consequences and craft the positive consequences.

Many decades ago, the great Brazilian educator Paulo Friere (2004[1970]) wrote about 'generative themes'. Generative themes are the fundamental stories, truths, or ideologies that define a community or group, as explained by themselves. A group's elucidation of their generative themes was an early step in the process Friere labeled conscientization. The farmer discourse presented in this study incorporates the generative themes of each group of farmers. However, it also incorporates the unintended consequences of out-dated or obsolete discourse. I think this process of identifying and developing generative themes, and associated discourses, offers potential for farmer organizations and rural communities to more consciously craft empowering discourses.

Sustainable agriculture

Finally, there are implications for sustainability of agriculture in this analysis of farmer discourse. Some of the groups' discourses have the potential to engage dominant, unsustainable, discourses in a way that may be transformative. For example, in Chapter Two I describe alternative Iowa farmers' discourses of community and ecological integrity, which are powerful counters to conventional discourse. Similarly, in Chapter Four we see that Huancayo subsistence farmers' discourse is based on an ideology that values the health of the land, and the role of farmers in adjusting practices to better safeguard that health.

These discourses are notably based on substantive, not formal, rationality. Though all five groups of farmers talked about economic aspects of their farming, the more developed discourses that support sustainability were substantive, especially around community and environmental values. Though there are no doubt significant economic

and efficiency reasons to pursue a more sustainable agriculture, it does not seem that those themes resonate most strongly in discourses of sustainability. Rather, it turns out that meaning and values are fundamental in defining the discourses of sustainability.

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Appendix: Sample interview question guide

Question guide for Iowa Farmers

Tell me about your farm.

What do you produce? Is it the same every year?

Who works on your farm?

How many acres?

Why are you a farmer?

What's your favorite aspect of being a farmer?

Do you have a personal philosophy about farming?

Do you want your kids to be farmers?

Do you think that agriculture is important for the United States? Why?

Iowa? Why?

What kind of agriculture is most important?

How do you know when to apply agri-chemicals?

What do you think about U.S. agricultural policy? (Farm Bill?)

What do you think about world agricultural policy? (other countries or international trade agreements)

What do you think about subsidies in agriculture?

How would you like to see U.S. agricultural policy?

What are the most important ethical aspects in agriculture or food production right now?

Are you involved in any agriculture organizations? Which ones?

Where do you get information about agriculture? What are the most important sources?

When I talked with Peruvian export farmers who grow vegetables for the U.S. and Europe, they told me that they think that agricultural subsidies in the U.S. and Europe are unfair, since they and other farmers in the developing world have to compete against products that are subsidized, sometimes in Peruvian markets. But smaller farmers thought that all farmers ought to receive some support from government. But bigger

exporters said that they feel the emphasis ought to be on “free trade”. What do you think about these perspectives?

When I talked with Peruvian peasant farmers in the Andes mountains, who grow food for their own consumption and some for sale in local markets, they told me that what is most important for them is to grow healthy food for their families, with a reduction in pesticides. They would like to see more emphasis in world agriculture on reducing the use of agri-chemicals. What do you think about this perspective?

Finally, when I talk with alternative farmers (usually smaller scale, diversified, sometimes organic) here in Iowa, they tell me that for them what is most important is to grow food for their local communities, in a way that is environmentally sustainable. They think that U.S. policy ought to be more focused on local production of food products and conservation, and less on subsidizing commodities. What do you think about this perspective? *[For interviews with alternative farmers, this question was replaced by an equivalent question asking about the FTW discourse.]*

Is there anything that you’d like to add?

Is there anything that you’d like to ask me about my project or anything else?

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[AF1]cite, goddamn you

Page: 120

[AF2]why, exactly, do you hate citations so much?