CONSTRUCTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AT A NORTHWEST FARMERS' MARKET: UNDERSTANDING THE PERFORMANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY

by

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An Abstract of the Dissertation of

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In this project I explore the commitment to "social sustainability" within sustainable agriculture. Using participant observations at a Northwest farmers' market, interviews with market consumers, and interviews as well as farm tours with sustainable farmers, I examine the construction and practice of sustainability in a particular setting. The environmental issues tied to conventional agriculture are numerous and well documented; however, "social sustainability"—the extent to which sustainable agriculture provides a food system that is accessible, inclusive, uses fair labor practices, and is economically sustainable—is often less emphasized and more ambiguously

defined (despite the emphasis by scholars and practitioners of sustainable agriculture that the movement is good for social justice). My project, therefore, uses critical feminist theory to explore how the ideals of social sustainability are put into practice by consumers and farmers of sustainable food in a society where social injustices are often embedded on both a structural and individual level.

Emphasizing farmers' markets as the most important social space in which the values of sustainable agriculture are constructed, I use a local case study of a Pacific Northwest farmers' market, the consumers who shop there, and the farmers who sell goods there to understand how the values of social sustainability are put into practice. After reviewing the relevant literature and outlining the methods I use, I first discuss farmers' participation in the market and sustainable agriculture more broadly, using interviews and observations at different local farms to analyze how farmers see their commitment to sustainable agriculture as tied to forms of privilege and oppressions. Next, I use participation observation at the market itself to analyze how the space mediates the demands of "social sustainability" in a farmers' market system that is ultimately entrenched within a capitalist economy. Finally, I examine consumers' perceptions of the market, why they shop there, why they think more people do not shop at the market, and their definitions of sustainability; their responses reveal the complex ways that consumers define and understand sustainable agriculture.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From *E. coli* contaminated cantaloupe and spinach, to apples and pears tainted with pesticides, to the knowledge that strawberries are voyaging from Chile and accumulating 1600 miles of carbon pollution along the way, many Americans are thinking more about the foods we consume. Decisions about how to nourish our families and ourselves are becoming more complex. Is it better to buy organic or local? In a global world where it is always summer somewhere, what does it mean to eat with the seasons? We make these decisions with every dollar we spend on food, and these decisions are undeniably important given the potential impact our consumption has on our bodies, our society, and our planet. It is not surprising, then, that issues of sustainable food are often framed as questions and discussions about health: the health of the environment, the health of the body of the consumer, and to a lesser extent the health of the people who are growing the food.

Yet many proponents of sustainable agriculture argue that at its core sustainability is about more than health and about more than the environment. It is a rejection of many conventional beliefs about the social and natural world, beliefs such as that "man" controls nature. It is based in a belief about rebuilding local community ties. It is a

movement challenging the idea that science and technology alone are able to build a better world. According to Sumner (2005), the promise of sustainable agriculture means "promot[ing] the civil commons, not the profit margins of an elite group, as the key to individual and community well-being." It means, "protecting and enabling universal access to the life goods" and "include[s] the dedicated support of small farms that provide meaningful employment, contribute to the local food supply, and steward the environment." Ultimately, sustainable agriculture should develop "the active participation of those involved in all aspects of the food and agricultural system, so they could work together to build the co-operative human constructions that make up the civil commons" (309).

Sustainable agriculture, therefore, is in many ways an explicit rejection of the status quo, specifically a rejection of the practices and epistemologies of conventional agriculture. The environmental issues tied to conventional agriculture are numerous and well documented, from pollution caused by runoff to a loss of biodiversity. And while the social issues related to conventional agriculture are less often discussed, they are equally problematic and tied to the same failure to account for the hidden and communal costs of agricultural production. As industrial agriculture grows, the number of farmers able to support themselves without gigantic plots of land and multimillion dollar equipment also shrinks. Thus, according to those who promote ideologies of sustainability, by rejecting conventional agriculture for sustainable agriculture—either as a farmer or consumer—one is supporting more than a choice of fertilizer; one is taking part in constructing a more socially just world. In many ways a shift to sustainable

practices is a social movement where people are consciously rejecting what seems a fundamentally flawed and broken agricultural system, and the values therein (Allen 2006; Buck, Getz, and Guthman 1997; Goodman and DuPuis 2002; Hall and Mogyorody 2007).

In this dissertation, then, I am interested in the ways that sustainable agriculture is seen as progressive, even transgressive, by providing an alternative to not only the environmental injustices but also the *social injustices* of corporate agribusiness. This emphasis on social justice in sustainable agriculture is embedded in nearly all definitions of sustainable agriculture. For example, it is used by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (2010)—"the leading voice for sustainable agriculture in the federal policy arena"—who note, "The basic goals of sustainable agriculture are environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity." It is also reflected in the mission statement of the Northwest Farmers' Market—the market at the heart of this project—which declares that the market is for the "the entire community" and is run through "democratic association[s]." Furthermore, as was stated in the title of a pamphlet put out by the Farmers Market Coalition, sustainable agriculture is proclaimed as not just good for the environment but "good for everyone" (Coalition 2007).

Yet despite this emphasis on social sustainability and social relations in sustainable agriculture, most of the research on sustainable agriculture has used an environmental and natural science perspective, where the challenges and promises of sustainable practices in promoting a more environmentally sustainable and just planet are

the central focus (Goodland 1995; Kates RW 2001; Wackernagel, Schulz, Deumling, Linares, Jenkins, Kapos, Monfreda, Loh, Myers, Norgaard, and Randers 2002). The social aspects of sustainability are far less researched. In fact, the discourses about sustainable agriculture have been framed in such a way that certain topics or critiques are simply not addressed and do not seem to be a part of the dialogue. As Allen (1993) notes in her book on sustainability, "social issues, when raised, are often safely vague and framed in terms of 'socially acceptable' as it refers to environmentally and economically sustainable institutions and practices." For Allen, "this begs the question, socially acceptable for *whom?*" (145).

Sustainable agriculture may be frequently touted as "an opportunity to improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of agriculture," (Barbercheck, Hinrichs, Karsten, Mortensen, Ostiguy, Richard, and Sachs 2006); however, while there are strict environmental regulations that one must meet to stamp "organic" on a box, the truth is that this stamp tells us nothing about the social relations that were part of producing that product. In part, this is because of a lack of definition. While the idea of "social sustainability" is embedded throughout discussions, clear definitions about what it means to be "socially sustainable" are nearly absent. The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program at the University of California Davis is one of the few groups to develop what this definition might look like when they argue the "stewardship of human resources includes consideration of social responsibilities such as working and living conditions of laborers, the needs of rural communities, and consumer health and safety both in the present and the future" (Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell 1997). While

this definition of social sustainability is important and useful, more discussion and definition of what social sustainability actually means in practical terms is nearly nonexistent, despite the rhetorical importance of social sustainability within the movement.

In this project, therefore, I am interested in understanding how social sustainability is and is not produced within sustainable agriculture. This project uses a feminist intersectional perspective that is concerned with issues of race, class, and gender equity. Using this perspective, I see social sustainability in sustainable agriculture as creating a system that produces food using socially just labor practices, practices that are concerned with safe working conditions, fair pay, and gender and race equity. Furthermore, I see social sustainability as creating a distribution system that maximizes the availability of food to the entire community. Examining this availability, I pay particular attention to the ways that the spaces of a farmers' market may privilege certain consumers rather than minimizing race, class, and gender privilege.

Using a Northwest Farmers' Market as a case study, my project explores how the consumers and the farmers involved in sustainable agriculture put the goals of social sustainability into practice. This project uses the Northwest Farmers' Market as a space where the consumers (who want to buy and support locally produced food) and the farmers (who want to sell their food) interact to meet their mutual needs and in the process create a particular construction of "sustainable agriculture." Specifically I ask: How are the ideals of social sustainability put into practice by consumers and farmers of sustainable food in a society where social injustices are often embedded on both a

structural and individual level? For example, how do consumers conceptualize their participation in the market? How do consumers understand people who do not shop at the market? What social location did one have before becoming a sustainable farmer? Do class and educational privileges shape a farmer's commitment to the project of sustainability? Does the presentation of sustainability at the market create a space that privileges particular consumers or farmers? Who is constructed as the "ideal" consumer at the market and what consumer seems most "welcome" in that space?

Thus rather than assuming that sustainable agriculture really is "good for everyone," this project examines who is privileged in the space and practice of sustainable agriculture. As this suggests (and as I discuss in more detail in my literature review), this interrogation of privilege within sustainable agriculture is based on an intersectional understanding of social justice. Recognizing that race, class, and gender are not distinct and separate social categories but rather continually overlap with and reinforce each other, my project examines the issues of social justice from this broad and intersectional perspective, analyzing the complex ways that various privileges and assumptions across these categories manifest themselves in the practice of sustainable agriculture.

To that end, this project specifically examines the complex spaces and social relations at the Northwest Farmers' Market, a farmers' market that sells sustainably grown foods and other products in a medium sized town in the Pacific Northwest that frequently wins national awards for being one of the "greenest" in the US. It is a community that prides itself on being an alternative to the status quo. These values are

clearly reflected in the Northwest Farmers' Market. The market is a place where people often actively defy social conventions; for instance, there is man who attended the market each week in head-to-toe tie dye with a large, live parrot on his shoulder, and a woman who attended the market topless to make it easier to breastfeed her baby during the warm summer months. This is the kind of place where your baby can wear their Che Guevara onesie with pride. The consumers and farmers at the market struck me as having an abiding belief not only in the environmental goals of in sustainable agriculture but also the social goals of social equity and inclusion.

Looking at this farmers' market as well as my interviews with farmers and consumers helps to illuminate my questions for two reasons. The first reason is the growing importance of farmers' markets to sustainable agriculture as a movement; farmers' markets are the public face of sustainable agriculture. A USDA (2009) report notes that between 1994 and 2009 the number of markets increased from 1,755 to 5,274, a 300% increase in only fifteen years. Furthermore, Gillespie et al. (2008) called farmer's markets the "keystone institutions in rebuilding local food systems" (70). More and more, then, farmers' markets are the face of sustainable agriculture and a space where the transfer of food and information passes directly from the farmer, who is likely deeply invested in sustainable agriculture, to the consumers, who have varying degrees of knowledge and commitment to sustainable agriculture.

In this way, farmers' markets provide a unique space where farmers and consumers of sustainable agriculture are able to interact. I believe that it is in these interactions that a vision of sustainability is constructed. If we see sustainability as a kind

of socially constructed performance, then the farmers' market is the most public stage in which this performance takes place. Moreover, the space of the farmers' market becomes a key site to examine how the intersections of gender, race, and class help to inform the relations at the core of the market. And yet, markets have not been analyzed in this way. Typically, the work on farmers' markets focuses on either sustainable farmers or the consumers. In fact, there is a great deal of market research done on farmers' markets that often tends to focus on the buying habits of the consumer as well as educating farmers on how to make themselves more profitable. No one is looking at the market as a space of interaction that constructs a vision of sustainability.

As I discuss in more detail in my methods chapter, this project uses a qualitative approach with three different components to analyze this interaction and ultimately answer my research question. The first component is short, structured interviews with consumers at the Northwest Farmers' Market. I conducted 48 interviews with consumer and asked them questions about the market as well as about sustainable farming in general. The second component is farm visits and interviews at eight sustainable farms. These took the form of farm tours where we typically walked around the farm and I learned about the operation followed by in-depth semi-structured interviews. These farm visits typically took about half a day. The final component was participant observation at the Northwest Farmers' Market. I observed at the market for a full season, which is approximately six months. At the height of the season I was at the market 3 times per week for approximately two hours at a time.

I want to be clear that the intention of this project is not to condemn sustainable agriculture nor this farmer's market in particular. I believe that without question the industrial agricultural system in this country is broken and the environmental havoc caused by this system is only a part of what is broken with this system. I believe that sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets offer real solutions to these issues. But I also believe that part of building a more socially just food system involves asking the kinds of questions about social sustainability that my project asks.

On a personal level, the more I've become invested in this project the more I have sought out food at farmers' markets. So while part of what I am doing in this project is problematizing issues around gender, race, and class in sustainable agriculture, ultimately it is with the belief that this is an absolutely essential system, that industrial agriculture is a disaster for rural communities, for the environment, and for social inclusion. I see this research as offering an important reminder that this is a system that is still being constructed, a system that includes many participants who seem invested in making it socially just. But despite the growing importance of farmers' markets and the possibilities that they offer for creating a viable alternative to conventional food systems, research on them is still quite limited. Morevoer, research that examines issues of social inclusion and research that uses an intersectional perspective simply does not exist. My work not only fills a gap in academic research in sustainable agriculture, it asks questions that I think are essential to the success of sustainable agriculture as a system.

This dissertation is broken into seven chapters. Chapter II, the literature review, explores both the research on sustainable agriculture and intersectional work

understanding the relationships between gender, race, and class. Chapter III, the methods chapter, outlines the methodology that provides the data for this dissertation. In Chapter IV, "The Farmers," I use my interviews and farm visits with farmers to examine how they negotiate the material realities of farming with the ideologies of sustainable agriculture. Chapter V, "The Northwest Farmers' Market," primarily examines the interactions at the market and how these interactions create a particular vision of sustainability. Chapter VI, "The Consumers," analyzes my interviews with consumers and explores issues of inclusion based the views of these consumers. Finally, my conclusion, Chapter VII, offers theoretical and practical solutions to creating a more inclusive alternative foods system.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

On the surface sustainable agriculture appears to be about producing food that is free from pesticides and is produced locally, but at its core, sustainable agriculture is about much more than producing a better tomato. As I note in the introduction, it represents not just a shift in a mode of agricultural production, but also a shift in thinking about natural and social worlds. As Beus and Dunlap (1990) note in their foundational work on rural sociology, sustainable agriculture is based in a belief about rebuilding local community ties and working in harmony with nature. They note that it is a movement that is based in challenging the idea that science and technology are able to build a better world. According to Sumner (2005), the promise of sustainable agriculture means "protecting and enabling universal access to the life goods" and it also means "the active participation of those involved in all aspects of the food and agricultural system, so they could work together to build the co-operative human constructions that make up the civil commons" (309). Sustainable agriculture is a conscious rejection of conventional agriculture and its basis in corporate, global capitalism and is frequently touted as "an opportunity to improve the economic, environmental and *social sustainability* of agriculture" (Barbercheck et al. 2006, emphasis mine).

Sustainable agriculture is constructed not only in opposition to conventional, industrial agriculture, therefore, but as a conscious rejection and transgressive reorganization of this system's environmental and social epistemologies. In my project I emphasize how issues of social sustainability are dealt with in this seemingly transgressive space. Using a Northwest Farmers' Market as a case study I ask: how are the ideals of social sustainability put into practice by consumers and farmers of sustainable food in a society where social injustices are often embedded on both a structural and individual level?

While my dissertation is a local case study, the theoretical lens I use extends the scope of my research to a broader understanding of race, class, and gender politics in sustainable agriculture. I examine the space of the market as one in which hegemonic constructions of race relations, class distinctions, and patriarchy are at times reproduced, despite the fact that consumers and farmers both espouse strong beliefs about making sustainable agriculture something that is available to all people. This project, therefore, examines how the space of the market mediates these contradictions by creating an alternative to industrial agriculture but an alternative that sometimes affirms conventional ideas about race, class and gender.

This literature review examines the literature on farmers' markets, the consumers that use them, and the farmers that grow for them. My discussion involves research in the fields of rural sociology, environmental sociology, and the sociology of food, as well as work that deals more explicitly with intersectional feminist concerns of race, class, and gender. The first three fields in particular tend to have a great deal of overlapping focus

and interests yet rarely make reference of these other fields. Thus this literature review sees the fields of rural sociology, environmental sociology, and the sociology of food as intricately connected. Furthermore, while the sociology of food literature often includes a feminist leaning, the other fields frequently ignore the role of gender and race in their analysis. This literature review uses a feminist lens to examine this research and is particularly attuned to scholars' theorizing about gender, race, and class in their analysis.

I work to incorporate these often separate fields by organizing this literature review into the five topics that are central to the project rather than a specific area of research. Thus rather than having a section that discusses literature from "rural sociology" I discuss "the farmers" and use research from all these fields. Furthermore, I have worked to include an intersectional analysis of race, class, and gender in each of the topics rather than separating the research into racialized, classed, and gendered categories.

Specifically, in this literature review I begin by defining sustainable agriculture and discussing the politics of this definition. The second section details and defines an intersectional perspective and ties this project's goals to this literature. I then discuss the literature that is specific to consumption and sustainable agriculture, followed by a section on farming and sustainability and a section specifically addressing farmers' markets. The literature on sustainable agriculture is vast and is rapidly growing; yet, despite this, my project is the first comprehensive study of the dynamics between the consumers, the farmers, and a farmers' market. Furthermore, the use of a feminist intersectional approach to explore these issues is under-utilized in the study of

sustainability. While there are a limited number of studies that examine class or race, the research on farmers' markets, consumers, and farmers fails to use an intersectional perspective. Furthermore, this project is particularly timely. As I discuss in more detail later in the chapter, the number of farmers' markets has exploded in the last decade, yet what we know about them, while growing, is still relatively limited. Thus this project brings a new perspective to the research on sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets in two important ways: it is the first project that looks comprehensively at the relationship between consumers, farmers, and a farmers' market and second, it is the first project to bring an intersectional approach to these fields.

Defining Sustainable Agriculture

This project at its core focuses on how the goals of social sustainability in sustainable agriculture are enacted in the space of the Northwest Farmers' Market. Thus an understanding of the term "sustainable" and "sustainable agriculture" is important. "Sustainable" is a term that has been used to describe everything from housing materials to hotdogs in recent years. "Sustainable" as we currently understand it first entered the environmental lexicon relatively recently. In 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, often known simply as the Bruntland Commission, published the report, "Our Common Future" in which they defined "sustainable development" as development "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987:8).

Three years later Beus and Dunlap (1990) wrote what has become a pivotal work detailing the difference between conventional and sustainable agriculture; they referred to it as the "Key Elements of the Competing Agricultural Paradigms" and synthesize the works of twelve scholars from both paradigms into a concise table that illustrates what tend to be the primary differences between conventional and sustainable agriculture (598-599). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, they argue that (among other attributes) whereas conventional agriculture is focused on competition in the market and domination over nature, sustainable agriculture focuses on community building and working in harmony with nature. As both an economic pursuit and ideological project, sustainable agriculture is actively structured in opposition to conventional agriculture.

While Beus and Dunlap's discussion of sustainable agriculture is the most frequently referenced by scholars when one wants to understand sustainable agriculture, others do offer clear, if broad, definitions of sustainable agriculture. For example, Guthman (2004) defines it as "a system of agricultural production and distribution that integrates environmental health with economic profitability" (220). Outside of academic journals, the most frequently used definitions comes from Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell (1997) who argue that, "Sustainable agriculture integrates three main goals--environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity." They go on to expand upon the definition put forth by the Bruntland Commission when they argue that:

> Sustainability rests on the principle that we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

> needs. Therefore, *stewardship of both natural and human resources* is of prime importance. Stewardship of human resources includes consideration of social responsibilities such as working and living conditions of laborers, the needs of rural communities, and consumer health and safety both in the present and the future. Stewardship of land and natural resources involves maintaining or enhancing this vital resource base for the long term.

Among farmers and activists, pieces of this definitions circulate; for example, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (2010), which refers to itself as the "the leading voice for sustainable agriculture in the federal policy arena," uses the Feenstra, Ingels and Cambells definition as part of their own, arguing that, "The basic goals of sustainable agriculture are environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity." They conclude that, "NSAC's vision of agriculture is one where a safe, nutritious, ample, and affordable food supply is produced by a legion of family farmers who make a decent living pursuing their trade, while protecting the environment, and contributing to the strength and stability of their communities" (1).

Yet in some ways a clear, singular definition of sustainability and sustainable agriculture is difficult to find and articulate. Some farmers, scholars, and activists (Guthman included) are hesitant to define sustainability because of the ways that the definition of "organic" has been co-opted by conventional agriculture. While fertilizers and pesticides are not being applied in USDA certified "organic" agriculture, organic agriculture is becoming "conventional" in scale and technique in some places. In fact, a number of scholars argue that it was the USDA's defining of "organic" that allowed this

form of alternative agriculture to be co-opted by corporate agriculture and corporate food systems, noting that now even Walmart has an organic section (Buck, Getz, and Guthman 1997; DeLind 2000; Guthman 2004; Johnston 2008; Kloppenburg, Lezberg, De Master, Stevenson, and Hendrickson 2000). Thus there is a hesitancy in defining sustainable agriculture because, as DeLind notes, a definition allows the USDA (or other agencies) to "insert themselves between individuals and direct experience and responsibility" (200). She notes that a USDA label, for example, "becomes a surrogate for personal awareness and judgment," arguing that "we place our trust in standards and certification processes at the expense of our trust in interpersonal relationships and daily interactions informed by wisdom locally generated and grounded in place" (200).

Furthermore, these scholars argue that the act of defining "organic" agriculture allows the focus to be pulled away from the process of growing the food and instead is turned toward a focus on inputs into that food. In other words, conventional growers were sometimes able to simply replace their previous fertilizer with one that met the USDA definition of organic without changing their farming methods in any real way. Because of this, many farmers, scholars and activists seem reluctant to develop a single definition of sustainable agriculture.

A definition of "sustainable agriculture" is important for the purposes of this project. Yet I am also hesitant to create a simple definition because in the process of doing this research it was clear that each farmer had his or her own definition and that sustainability was a means not end. Ikerd (2007) perhaps summed up those feelings best when he poetically noted, "Sustainability is a direction rather than a destination, like a

star that guides the ships at sea but remains forever beyond the horizon" (1). For example, I would characterize all the farms I visited as participating in a system of "sustainable agriculture." Most of the farmers I interviewed, despite the immense time, energy, and commitment involved, said there was always more that they wanted to do to make their farms sustainable. This speaks to the ways that sustainability is constantly in flux rather than a discrete end that one can meet. In fact, as I discuss in The Farmers Chapter, many of them noted the plastic hoop houses that they used to start vegetables as an instance where they were failing their own definition of sustainability. Moreover, some felt that no matter what they did their farms could never be sustainable because they were flying on airplanes and using up fossil fuels to learn better techniques for growing sustainably. In this way the farmers themselves see sustainable agriculture as a process.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of clarity in this project, when I use the term "sustainable agriculture," I have Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell's (1997) definition in mind, particularly their emphasis on the "three legs of sustainability": environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity. Furthermore, I find the Bruntland Commission's definition, particularly its emphasis on not compromising the needs of future generations as we go about meeting our current needs, an important measuring stick of sorts to judge how the goals of sustainability are being met. In this project, therefore, I examine how a particular market constructs sustainable agriculture with these definitions and goals in mind. But in the project I emphasize not only what is in that space, but what is also outside of it: are we missing other forms of "sustainable

food" practices in communities that lack the power to define what they are doing as "sustainable?"

A Feminist Intersectional Approach

Ultimately this project is concerned with understanding how the values of social and economic equity manifest themselves within sustainable agriculture using the Northwest Farmers' Market as a case study. In my theorizing and understanding of social and economic equity in this project I take an intersectional feminist approach. This approach is most often concerned with oppression and privilege as it relates to race, class, and gender (often alongside other forms of oppression). In this project I am particularly concerned with these issues and also include a limited discussion of ability and sexual orientation in my analysis of the construction of the market. From a conceptual standpoint the fact that these forms of oppression and privilege impact a person's experience is perhaps not difficult to imagine. Yet an intersectional perspective asks that we understand oppression as existing beyond personal experience and understand how institutions and structures are constructed in ways that are tied to race, class, and gender oppression and privilege. Theorists have pointed out that, despite being critically important, intersectional theorizing is fraught with challenges, something that is clear from my research.

Spelman (1988) points out that many theorists have attempted to determine which inequality, be it race or class, is more "fundamental" (116). There is obvious political gain from being able to generalize about "middle-class" experiences at the market or the

exploitation of "women" as farm laborers; however, in this attempt to determine which inequality is more fundamental, it means that we are once again seeing racism, sexism, and classism as somehow separate. Many theorists have pointed out that even the ways in which intersectionality is described shows an underlying belief that an individual's experience of race, class, and gender are discrete and divisible. Given this understanding of race, class, and gender, it is little wonder that some theorists and researchers have simply treated these categories as factors that can be added or multiplied together to get some total amount of oppression. Spelman (1988) notes that this is particularly problematic since, "an additive analysis treats the oppression of a Black woman in a society that is racist as well as sexist as if it were a further burden when, in fact, it is a different burden" (123).

Fenstermaker and West (2002a) also discuss these multiple math metaphors, pointing out the underlying problems with each at length in their discussion of "doing difference," while Glenn (1999) notes that one of the primary challenges of research on race, gender, and class is in creating a system of understanding that does not result in "double jeopardy" or "additive oppressions" for those who occupy more than one place of marginalization (4). Taking up this challenge, Collins (2004) suggests that perhaps the best way of conceptualizing multiple inequalities is by paying attention to "the interlocking nature of oppression" by developing "new theoretical interpretations of the interaction [between race, class and gender] itself" that do not see gender, race, and class as variables but rather see them as linked within a system of domination (110).

While the warnings these theorists offer to other theorists and researchers is certainly important and well founded, I have found very little in the way of concrete examples or advice for how one should actually go about practicing intersectional research. However, one example of an attempt to outline a methodological approach to intersectionality is based on the analysis of interactions. Fenstermaker and West (2002), for example, propose an "ethnomethodological perspective" that entails "a conceptual mechanism for perceiving the relations between individual and institutional practices and among forms of domination" and that does "not separate gender, race, and class as social categories" but "build[s] a coherent argument for understanding how they work simultaneously" (63-64). My project is built around this idea that intersectional work often works best when it is focused in part on interactions. In this project I see theorizing about interaction as one important way of doing intersectional work.

This focus on interaction as one way of dealing with intersectionality; however, has been critiqued by a number of scholars including Collins (2002), who argues that the constructionist paradigm Fenstermaker and West use obscures the structural relationship among patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. Moreover, Weber (2002) argues that, "West and Zimmerman obscure rather than illuminate the mechanisms of power in the production and maintenance of racism, classism, and sexism. For race, class, and gender scholarship, social relations of dominance/control and subordination/resistance are the cornerstones of theory" (89).

While the critiques of Fenstermaker and West are important, I tend to agree with Fenstermaker's and West's reply to such critiques (2002b), which asserts that a focus on

interaction does not necessarily mean that mechanisms of power and oppression are ignored. Certainly, power and inequality are established at multiple levels through interaction with both individual and social structures. My project offers an important understanding of sustainable agriculture and need not obscure larger structural forces; in fact, I see these micro-level understandings as ultimately illuminating large structural issues.

Throughout this literature review I have worked to include those works that deal with issues of race, class, and gender in their analysis of elements of sustainable agriculture. Certainly not all these scholars would claim to be doing intersectional research, but it is a little surprising how few seem concerned about intersectional issues. Rather, someone may write an interesting article about whiteness or an article that is attuned to class issues at farmers' markets, yet they makes little or no mention of gender. As this literature will demonstrate, my dissertation, with its focus on the relationships between farmers, consumers and markets, is unique; furthermore, an intersectional feminist perspective in the study of sustainable agriculture in the US brings a lens to this analysis that is currently under-utilized.

Consuming Sustainable Agriculture

The research on who consumes sustainable food is spread widely in the literature and includes scholars studying the sociology of food, rural sociology, environmental sociology, the sociology of consumption, and work on marketing more generally. Work on consumption, however, extends beyond these disciplinary boundaries. Perhaps the

most well known and mostly widely cited research on consumption comes from Bourdieu's (1984) foundation work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Bourdieu uses a rich set of data to explore the relationship between consumption habits in everything from food to furniture. In his book he argues that "taste" and "distinction" are modes of consumption that become central ways to stratify social relations. He argues that there is a relationship between a group's power and prestige in society and their ability to use that power to define what consumers see as an example of their "good taste." Furthermore, he argues that these modes of distinction are directly related to seeing the tastes of those with less power and privilege as deficient. Ritzer's work is another example of a scholar held in high esteem whose work focuses on consumption. He is perhaps most well known for his groundbreaking book on consumer and corporate culture, *The McDonaldization of Society,* and has been an outspoken critic of American sociology's tendency to ignore the role of consumption (Ritzer 1996; 2000).

Other scholars have noted this trend within sociological studies. Within work in rural sociology Goodman and DuPuis note that, "the treatment of production and consumption in agro-food studies is still highly asymmetric" with far more research focused on farming and production than on consumers (2002:5). Of course, this trend is not simply found in the study of farmers' markets. The fact that the study of production systems seems to be the primary focus of researchers is related to a Marxist understanding of the role of consumers as a group that ultimately has no power in a capitalist system. As Goodman and DuPuis (2002) note, "bourgeois ideology gives

consumption the appearance of emancipation when, in fact, it is implicated with capitalism" (13).

Yet I see the study of consumption to be important in the understanding of sustainable agriculture as a system. While there is no doubt that sustainable agriculture is rooted in commodity relations, it was Marx himself that put the power for revolutionary change in the hands of the people (although clearly this act was not tied to consumption). In fact, there is an active discussion of whether sustainable agriculture can overcome free market capitalism (Allen 2006). Yet a number of scholars note that the dynamics of sustainable agriculture have elements of a social movement. My analysis, while not focusing on sustainable agriculture as a social movement, offers important insights into understanding farmers' markets, insights that are overlooked by simply focusing on production.

For one, while it may contradict a Marxist analysis, I believe that it is important to understand consumers as agents. This is not to say that I believe that every purchase of an organic apple is a revolutionary act, but it is to say that many of the consumers I interviewed seemed to be actively engaging in how their choices impacted both the environmental and social worlds. It is too simplistic to see consumers as "dupes" who have no impact over the way their worlds are structured; it would seem that growth of sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets reflect this power. Even Buttel (2000), who tends to see consumers as having little power to resist multi-national corporations, notes in his often cited article about the controversy over recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) in cows' milk that while consumers played a "tangible, but relatively minor

role… parallel trends in food politics could make the consumption/consumer dimension of food politics more important in the future" (5).

While sustainable agriculture has not led to an end to capitalism, these markets offer a clear critique of what industrial agriculture under capitalism has produced. As Johnston (2008) notes, "it is impossible to create simple categories of 'revolutionary' and 'co-opted.' The challenge for food activists and scholars is to try to identify subtle degrees of emancipation and domination in food politics" (94). A study of consumers offers us a more complex and complete picture of farmers' markets and sustainable agriculture and is an important piece of the analysis.

However, what we do know about consumers is somewhat limited. As previously noted, there are a number of studies examining the demographics of farmers' market consumers. In general these scholars report similar findings; they note the average consumer is a woman in her late thirties to early forties with an above average income and education (Onianwa, Mojica, and Wheelock 2006; Walton, Kirby, Henneberry, and Agustini 2002). Of course, markets are highly localized, so while these demographics may vary from place to place, in general these findings are widely accepted. Class in particular is an area that is often mentioned by scholars who note a classed dynamic to sustainable agriculture, arguing that the consumption of sustainable agriculture seems to be related to a high education and income level (DeLind 2000; Goodman and DuPuis 2002; Hinrichs and Kremer 2002; Slocum 2007).

For example Slocum (2007) notes that, "those involved in alternative food tend to be economically and/or socially middle class. They have the wealth to buy organic, the

inherited or schooled knowledge about nutrition or the environment and they are politically liberal to left" (522). Goodman and DuPuis (2002) reiterate this point, arguing that "organic food consumption is presently a middle-class privilege—a 'class diet,' if you will." Yet, importantly, they go on to note that this "should not deny the politics of this activity" (29). Making a similar point, in her evocatively titled article, "Counterhegemony or bourgeois piggery," Johnston (2008) argues that despite the fact that the sustainable food movement tends to be a middle class phenomenon, it is too simplistic to deride sustainable food consumers as snobbish bourgeoisie. Instead, she argues that we must examine hegemony within food systems, dwell in the complexities of the system, and see "genuine compromise by dominant classes" (105). She argues that food systems can be emancipatory if they reclaim the commons and create a postconsumer ideology that meets basic "needs, desires, and pleasures [in ways] that are ecologically sustainable" (102). One of her primary arguments is that it is always the easiest to point out the villains, but it can be harder to explore and see progressive potential.

Another interesting perspective on the relationship between class and sustainable agriculture is Stephenson and Lev's (2007) research, which examines how class impacts people's support of sustainable agriculture. In their survey of 500 Oregon consumers, the researchers found that income and education were *not* associated with the support of local agricultural products. This study complicates other research which finds that income and education are tied to the consumption of sustainable foods. Stephenson and Lev's research suggests that there is a difference between *supporting* versus *buying* local

products; it also raises the question about what gets defined as "sustainable agriculture." This suggests that a community's relationship with "local food" is in part tied to what they construct as local or sustainable.

For example, the working class population they studied in Albany, Oregon, was more familiar with roadside stands and meatlockers as an example of sustainable foods, whereas for Corvallis, Oregon, residents, the highly educated middle class population in the study was more familiar with CSAs and food cooperatives. This study suggests that despite important demographic differences in income and education levels, the support for local food was similar across income and education lines. This raises interesting questions about the availability of "sustainable" foods in all communities and it begs the question: what is sustainable, who gets to decide? Ultimately it raises the question: is sustainable agriculture (defined in my project and most other projects as tied to participation in farmer's markets, CSAs, and food cooperatives) being defined too narrowly? For example, does hunting count as "sustainable" food? DuPuis and Goodman (2005) note that, "consumers of a particular class and ethnicity have had control over constructing what is 'good' food, what food systems need to be 'saved'" (365).

This concern with the power to define what is "good" food is, in part, tied to how food systems are racialized. This concern with race and the consumption of sustainable agriculture has been dealt with by only a handful of scholars. In Guthman's (2008) survey of farmers' market managers she notes that, "people of color, and African Americans especially, do not participate in these markets proportionate to the population" (388). Guthman (2008) critiques the "if we only knew where our food came from"

rallying cry of sustainable agriculture, arguing that it is tempered with elements of color-blind racism as well as an inclination towards universalizing that is "often associated with whiteness" (388). Using data from surveys of market managers, she argues that rhetoric like "if they only knew" suggests that the reasons for nonparticipation are related to a lack of education or knowledge and ultimately works to minimize structural and cultural barriers to participation in alternative food networks (for example, a lack of markets in neighborhoods of color or consumers' familiarity with food typically sold at markets). This rhetoric allows the managers to avoid addressing why people of color are much less likely to buy food from this system.

Slocum (2007) shares this interest in whiteness at farmers' markets but takes a slightly different approach. She argues that, while "it should be said that there is something white about alternative food practice, that 'something white' is not equivalent to 'something negative'" (521). She sees whiteness in sustainable agriculture as something to be understood but not condemned outright because she argues, "whiteness coheres in alternative food practice in the act of 'doing good'" (526). Furthermore she notes that, "the desire for good and sufficient food and jobs and thriving economies is not white," nor I would add is it only a middle-class prerogative (521).

This idea is supported by two studies. In Webber and Dollahite's (2008) qualitative study of food choices among low income heads of households, they find that low income people are concerned about their food but that lack of access to local markets, compounded by not having a car, cost, and education about nutrition, were all barriers to participating in sustainable agriculture. This desire for good and sufficient food is also

noted by Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2006). In their study of farmers' market participation among African-Americans in a working class neighborhood in Chicago, researchers found that residents were more satisfied with the access, quality, variety, and prices of products available at their neighborhood farmers' market than they were of products available at their local grocery store. Yet, despite high levels of participation by consumers, the researchers noted that this market attracted fewer farmers: five farmers compared to 20-50 farmers at upper and middle class dominated markets. They also noted that this market had a much shorter selling season in comparison to other markets. While the research on race and farmers' markets is limited, these articles all add important details to work on consumption in these spaces, giving interesting insights about how markets are racialized and how race operates in these spheres.

In fact, while work on race is limited, it is actually work on gender and consumption that is the most scarce. This is particularly surprisingly given the amount of research on gender and consumption within the sociology of food. For example, in DeVault's (1992) groundbreaking book, *Feeding the Family*, she examines the kinds of reproductive labor involved in "feeding the family." She explores how everything from making the grocery list to remembering what foods members of the family like and do not like is tied to a system of gendered power and control. Other scholars like Counihan (1999) are similarly invested in understanding the relationship between the gendered body, eating, and cooking food. In fact, in the overall study of the consumption of food, gender often plays a central role in the overall analysis. That makes Allen and Sachs' (2007) conclusion that "studies of consumption in the sociology of agriculture typically

view consumers as ungendered subjects" all the more surprising (4). While all the demographic analyses point to women as disproportionately involved as consumers of sustainable foods, very few researchers do any theoretical work to understand how gender is related to consumption.

Even scholars such as Lockie et al. (2002)—who find that women are much more likely to consume organic food in Australia and suggest "that the higher level of responsibility taken by women for feeding children and other family members may go some way to explaining this gender difference"—do not include evidence to suggest that their very plausible explanation is actually the case (31). In a similar vein, Stern, Dietz, and Kalof (1993) find that women show more concern for environmental issues than men, and they suggest that this may be because "women in the United States are more engaged than men in life maintenance activities such as child rearing and engagement in the neighborhood and community" (361). Yet, despite theories that seem plausible, these studies are both large phone surveys that do not actually examine the mechanisms that led to these gender differences.

The best work on gender and consumption in sustainable agriculture is done by Allen and Sachs (2007), but even this important theoretical work is more a call to action than actual analysis. In their article, "Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics Of Food," they examine women's relationship to food and discuss everything from body image to who cooks and serves meals. Among their observations, they note that the burden for preparing the food often falls to women and that the work of preparing homemade, local and sustainable food is often quite labor intensive. Furthermore, as I

note above, they note that food preparation requires a great deal of invisible labor as it requires skills such as knowing what foods certain family members like and do not like. Allen and Sachs argue that a "scholarly turn towards consumption presents an excellent opportunity for increasing our understanding of women's connection to food" (5).

While I believe this article has the potential to become a foundational document for work on women and food, particularly for those doing work in the sociology of food and rural sociology, this work is specifically focused on gender and does not engage an intersectional approach. Furthermore, while many of the articles in this section offer particularly important and detailed analyses of farmers' market consumers, none of them use an intersectional approach. I find this surprising because it seems clear that race, class, and gender come together at the market in particular ways that construct the space, for example the ways that selling food at the market is dominated by white, middle-class, heterosexual couples. My work, which takes an explicitly intersectional approach to conduct a case study of a farmers' market, will fill an important gap in this research.

Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture

As noted earlier, the consumption/production debate in sustainable agriculture has tended to favor production, at least in terms of the amount of literature available about sustainable farms and farming. In fact, the body of sociological literature examining farming and farmers in sustainable agriculture is extensive and explores every part of a farm's production process. Furthermore, the research on farming and farmers often takes a larger theoretical approach, asking questions about sustainable agriculture in general.

Much of the research about "sustainable agriculture," therefore, is work that specifically examines the farmers or perhaps more specifically farming practices rather than consumption and the consumers of it.

Part of the work of this section then, is to look closely at specific issues within this wide body of literature. My project sees the farm and the farmers as part of a larger relational system, and I am particularly interested in the roles that farmers and the consumers have in constructing the space of the market using an intersectional approach. The research that examines the relationship between farmers and consumers is limited and tends to only include a brief mention. For example, Andreatta and Wickliffe's (2002) study of a North Carolina market suggests that consumers are overall more pleased with the market than the farmers and that the farmers believe "the real boss is the consumer" (172). Hinrichs (2000) argues that even in CSA relationships where consumers have seemingly little say in what they get in their boxes the consumers end up with most of the power because farmers need to continually work to make certain that the consumers are satisfied. Furthermore, the farmers must constantly work to convince the consumers to return for another season given the growing selection available to them. She notes that these inequities are particularly pronounced when class differences arise, for example, between well-to-do consumers and their less well-to-do farmers.

The findings of researchers examining the demographics of sustainable farmers add a layer of complexity to Hinrichs' conclusions. Comer et al. (1999) examined the difference between conventional and sustainable farmers and found sustainable farmers tend to be better educated, younger, and have more off-farm income as compared to

conventional farmers. While more research needs to be done into the demographics of sustainable farmers, these finding suggest that while a power difference may exist between consumers and farmers, it may be a power difference between two relatively empowered groups. Furthermore, the fact that consumers are seen in a position of power complicates a traditional Marxist understanding of power as situated in the hands of the producer.

This relationship between consumers and producers is one the primary focuses of my project. However, I am specifically interested in understanding the relationships between consumers and producers from an intersectional perspective. Thus, in the next sections I review the studies that relate to gender and then touch more briefly on the less researched areas of class and race. Interestingly, while issues of gender have been largely ignored in the study of markets and consumers, this research is much more developed in the study of farming and sustainable agriculture. For example, there is a great deal of important work on sustainability and gender happening internationally. Liepins' (1995; 1998; 2000; 2009) work on the "women in agriculture" movement is concerned with the relationship between gender and sustainable agriculture, focusing specifically on Australians and New Zealanders. Similarly, Brandth's (1994) research on "changing femininity" and the "social construction of women farmers" is based on her research in Norway. While important contributions to an understanding of gender and sustainability, which add to a conceptual understanding of gender and US agriculture, their analyses deal with the specifics of their local or national culture and structure.

There are a number of US scholars doing important work on the relationship between masculinity and sustainable agriculture. Barlett and Conger (2004), for example, find that the shift to sustainable agriculture has created a new type of masculinity for the Midwestern men involved in the movement. Research in this vein has also been done by Coldwell (2007) and by Peter, Bell, Jarnagin, and Bauer (2000). These scholars all argue that part of a male farmer's successful shift to sustainable agriculture requires him to shift his understanding of the relationship between masculinity and farming. After all, the very things that help to reinforce a conventional male farmer's masculinity—the use of big machinery, control of the environment through fertilizers and pesticides, and competition—are the very things that sustainable farmers are supposed to reject. In rejecting these elements of farming, the men have had to reconstruct what it means to be a successful male farmer. Unspoken in this research are the ways that this reconceptualization of masculinity may be restructuring sustainable farm masculinity in a way that still privileges a male model (albeit a new one) of farming; in other words this research looks at how this new form of masculinity is emerging but does not question the masculinization of farming in general. While this research is important and enlightening in its analysis of masculinity, it also reinforces the association between agriculture and masculinity, obscuring the role that women play in sustainable agriculture. This work on sustainable farm masculinity, then, often masks the many roles women play.

There does exist, however, a growing body of research on women and sustainable agriculture in the US. For example, Chiappe and Flora's (1998) pivotal article discusses the elements of sustainable agriculture that women involved with the movement felt were

important that were not included in Beus and Dunlap's (1990) original, and often cited, table outlining the differences between conventional and alternative agriculture. Chaippe and Flora (1998) note that the women they interviewed identified both quality of life and spirituality as elements that are important of their vision of alternative agriculture, elements that were not included in Beus and Dunlap's framework. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that Beus and Dunlap's elements are not gender neutral but in fact are a summary written up by men based on the research of other men. This is not to say that this table is not an important tool to understand sustainable agriculture but that the gendered implications of such a framework must be interrogated and included in an analysis of sustainable agriculture.

There is also research done based on interviews and participant observation with women involved with the sustainable farm movement, focusing on the ways women are situated within the movement. Meares (2010), for example, discusses the ways that men and women involved in sustainable agriculture feel that it affects their overall quality of life. She finds that men involved in sustainable agriculture often tied their quality of life to elements of the sustainable farming movement whereas the women involved are often doing farm labor that is less institutionally valued (such as reproductive labor) and thus are more likely to see their quality of life as coming from elements outside the farm. Trauger (2004), on the other hand, analyzes the ways that sustainable farming provides the community spaces that affirm the ability of female sustainable farm operators to succeed as farm operators. Finally, Hall and Mogyorody (2007) discuss the ways that the type of farming—livestock versus vegetable farming—affects one's beliefs in gender

equity. Using both survey and case study data, they find "female farmers on vegetable farms and mixed livestock/cash crop farms are more likely to be involved in farm production and management than women on field crop farms, where mechanization and capital intensive production is much higher" (289). Hall and Mogyorody conclude that "alternative farming will not produce transformed gender relations without specific political and ideological attention to promoting gender neutral practices and ideas within organic farm organizations and farms" (312), a conclusion reached by other scholars of gender and sustainable agriculture (Guthman 2004; Meares 1997).

Despite this rather ominous conclusion, it at least speaks to the fact that research on gender and sustainable agriculture is growing and continues to grow. The same cannot be said for research on race and ethnicity and sustainable farmers. There is a small body of literature that focuses on labor practices on these farms, a literature that, based on the demographics of farm laborers, tends to focus on Hispanic laborers. In Shreck, Getz, and Feenstra's (2006) article, "Social sustainability, farm labor, and organic agriculture: findings from an exploratory analysis," they find that support for adding the goals of social sustainability to sustainable agriculture (including a concern for racial/ethnic inequality) were at "at best lukewarm" although uneven, depending on the farmers interviewed. This lukewarm support is tied to the economic concerns of the farmers. For example Getz, Brown, and Shreck (2008) note that in 2003 it was actually last minute lobbying from organic growers in California that kept a loophole in the 1975 law banning the short handled hoe. The new law would have banned other kinds of stoop labor, labor that often leads to devastating back injuries. Thus, while organic and

sustainable agriculture offers farm workers protection from pesticides and herbicides that are used in industrial agriculture, the fact remains that sustainable and organic agriculture is highly labor intensive, and often the laborers involved in both sustainable and industrial agriculture are one and the same. While the labor process is a growing concern among scholars, research on the racial demographics of the growers continues to be almost completely ignored.

Yet there is important research done on issues related to food security and racial inequality. Examples of food deserts that lead to unequal access to food are numerous. For example, African American neighborhoods are eight times more likely to have liquor stores which feature high priced prepackaged food as compared to white and integrated neighborhoods (LaVeist and Wallace 2000). Furthermore, another study found fast food restaurant location was negatively correlated with income and positively correlated with the percentage of black residents (Block, Scribner, and DeSalvo 2004). Understanding the dire situation for obtaining healthy food in their own community (for example, only one grocery store (and 36 liquor stores) to feed 20,000 residents), The West Oakland Food Collaborative started in 2001 in Oakland, California. According to the group (or "Mo Food Better" as they were previously known) the cooperative emphasizes community self-sufficiency and links black farms with the black community.

As noted earlier, when given the opportunity, African-Americans in a low income Chicago neighborhood preferred produce from their farmers' market; importantly, Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2006) notes that at this market the farmers selling were African-American themselves. Yet she worries that "working class neighborhoods are more

likely to attract low-income farmers who might lack the government support necessary to maintain a more sophisticated farming enterprise."

Both the West Oakland Food Collaborative and the Chicago study suggest that, not surprisingly, land ownership matters, and I believe whiteness in farmers' markets can be tied back to inequality in land ownership. Of course, understanding the distribution of sustainable food is complex. For example Webber and Dollahite (2008) note that, "farmers practicing sustainable agriculture are at a distinct disadvantage in reaching these [low-income] households given the subsidies and 'economies of scale' that conventional, petro-chemical-based and subsidized agribusiness enjoy" (187). I think, however, these two studies strongly suggest that when a person of color owns land and is able to grow food on that land, it may mean that this food is more likely to end up on the plate of a person of color. Yet, despite the necessity of labor from people of color and women to the success of both conventional and sustainable agriculture, "women and ethnic minorities have not had equal access to land, capital, or decision making in the food and agriculture system" (Allen 1993:148). Land ownership among women and people of color (and African Americans in particular) is grossly unequal; African-Americans own less than one percent of the land while Hispanics own less than two percent, in part due to partitioning sales (the forced-sale of a farm by a partial owner, typically after the death of a farm owner without a will), non-participation in farm programs, and systemic discrimination by the USDA, as was noted in a 1997 class action lawsuit against the agency that is still being fought (Gilbert, Sharp, and Felin 2002).

Despite the fact that my research involves white farmers (mostly heterosexual

couples) and consumers who are also largely white, I find an understanding of this literature furthers my discussion and theorizing about land ownership and acquisition among the farmers I interviewed. Furthermore it helps develop my understanding of the relationship between consumers and producers.

Sustainable Agriculture and Farmers' Markets

Throughout much of this literature review I examine literature that deals with issues related to sustainable agriculture; in this literature the role of the farmer's market often play a central role. Yet, despite this work that often deals with farmers' markets, the markets as a space often plays a very minor role (if it is included at all) in the overall analyses. While the work that is being done is important, the lack of research examining farmers' markets directly is an area ripe for exploration in part because farmers' markets have become an essential part of the process of shifting from conventional to sustainable agriculture. In fact, as I noted in the introduction, Gillespie et al. (2008) refer to them as "keystone institutions in rebuilding local food systems" (70). They argue that because of the public nature of the markets they make sustainable agriculture highly visible and facilitate social exchanges of shared ideas and energy about sustainable food. They also note that they are places that allow sustainable farms to grow, and that they act to "incubate" these farms. Brown and Miller (2008) note that farmers' markets educate consumers about seasonal food as well as encourage farmers to grow a wide variety of foods.

Farmers' markets, therefore, are important because, as Hinrichs and Allen (2008) note, "simply implementing more sustainable production practices was not enough. Alternative production needed alternative markets in order to create an effective chain (and extend the gains) of a more sustainable agriculture" (229-30). It is not surprising, then, that as sustainable agriculture has grown, so have the number of farmers' markets during this period. A USDA (US Department of Agriculture 2009) report notes that between 1994 and 2008 the number of markets increased from 1,755 markets to 5,274 markets, a 300% increase in only fifteen years.

Yet, despite this large growth in farmers' markets, the research on them that directly analyzes the spaces of markets is somewhat limited. There are two pervasive types of articles on farmers' markets by non-sociologists: those written from a marketing perspective that are researched and designed for vendors and market managers (Govindasamy, Italia, and Adelaja 2002; Trobe 2001) and those that are written by the popular press and food magazines that are filled with photos of colorful tables piled with ripe fruit and vegetables (Hamilton 2002).

Articles that take a sociological perspective on farmers' markets, on the other hand, fit into two primary categories. The first are articles that tend to focus on examining the demographics of the markets; these studies are often similar in terms of their results as the research done for marketing purposes. For example Onianwa, Mojica, and Wheelock (2006) conducted interviews and handed out surveys at an Alabama market and found the average consumer was a 41 year-old female who had above a high school education, while Walton et al. (2002) found that the average consumer at an Oklahoma market was a

36 year-old highly educated woman with income over $40,000. While these demographic details are important to creating a comprehensive understanding of farmers' markets, they also tend to not include theorizing about the markets themselves. Rather, they are designed to answer rather simple but important questions about the demographics of market consumers.

The second kind of sociological research on markets fits better with the scope of my project. These studies focus on the larger theoretical questions about markets. For example Hinrichs (2000) focuses on commodity relations at farmers' markets and concludes that, "Despite the 'closer' social ties, this is still an economic arrangement—consumers are looking to meet their needs—farmers are looking to meet theirs—their relationships are still commodified" (297-8). Holloway and Kneafsey's (2000) examination of a market in the UK is an excellent example of an ethnographic analysis that is guided by an inductive analysis. In the case study they conclude that the sustainable market they examine is a new kind of "consumption space" which is constructed using both "conservative" and "alternative" discourses. They see the market as at times offering conservative ideas and "reactionary valorization" that link the rural with ideas about health and quality, but at the same time they see the market as representing a new and "diversifying" set of economic relations for rural communities. Like my work, they use participant observation as a method and the space itself becomes a focus of study. Slocum's (2007) examination of whiteness in a Minneapolis market uses a similar critical and ethnographic approach, arguing that while sustainable food

markets tends to be "white," we have to start somewhere to change our food system and this is an important, if imperfect, project.

The two aforementioned articles are a few examples of the very limited research on farmers' market that employs participant observation or ethnography. While there is an important and growing body of literature on farmers' markets, most of this work is actually focused on studying farmers' market consumers, managers, or vendors and involve little to no discussion about the space of the market, despite titles that suggests the work is theorizing about the market itself (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Kremen, Green, and Hanson 2007). This is not to say this research is not valuable; it clearly adds important elements to the body of literature about farmers' markets, but even scholars who are not using ethnographic methods to study markets note that "the market is more than just a physical space for commercial transactions; rather, the market… is an active contributor to the cultural dynamic within which those transactions take place" (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002:167).

My research project treats the market as an "active contributor" and assumes that studying the market itself offers a unique understanding about the ways that sustainable agriculture is constructed. My work treats the market as a space where both the consumers' and farmers' beliefs about sustainable agriculture are negotiated and uses participant observation to gather data about this space. This kind of ethnographic analysis, which understands the market as a place that not only reflects the consumers' and farmers' beliefs about farmers markets but also affirms them, fills an important niche in the relatively small body of literature about farmers' markets. Considering the

dramatic increase in the number of farmers' markets, this project is particularly timely and this type of analysis important to creating a more comprehensive understanding farmers' markets.

Conclusion

As I noted in the introduction, the shift from conventional to sustainable agriculture has been well analyzed from a natural science perspective; even social scientists have taken up the project of exploring the practices of producing sustainable food (Goodland 1995; Kates RW 2001; Wackernagel et al. 2002). However, the issues relating to the social aspects of sustainability are also important. Only fifteen years ago Allen (1993), the leading scholar in the field, noted that discourses about sustainable agriculture have been framed in such a way that certain topics or critiques are simply not addressed and does not seem to be a part of the dialogue. She sets up a challenge of sorts for scholars of sustainable agriculture, asking them to consider who specifically benefits from sustainability on a social level.

This literature review shows many scholars have taken up the challenge of investigating this question, from focusing on issues of racial inclusion at farmers' markets (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2007) to exploring class inequality and CSA consumers (Hinrichs and Kremer 2002). Yet, while this field is growing and a number of scholars are doing important work with the dramatic rise in the number of farmers' markets as well as rising concerns about the food, there is much work to be done. My dissertation plays an important role in expanding the work on sustainable agriculture in general and

farmers' markets in particular. For one, my work uses an ethnographic approach to study a Northwest farmers' markets. This approach allows me to examine the interactions between the actors in a market: the consumers as well as the farmers. This is the first project to systematically examine a market in this way. Furthermore, this approach is particularly well suited for intersectional research. In much of my work examining the literature I found that consumers and farmers were more often than not constructed as either ungendered or unraced, and that the markets were often also constructed in similar ways. This project sees intersectional analysis as critical to a more complete understanding of sustainable agriculture and to a more complete understanding of farmers' markets. This dissertation brings a feminist lens to a body of literature that is ripe for this analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This dissertation examines the relationships between consumers, farmers, and the farmers' market using both participant observation and interview methods. In this project, I interviewed both farmers and consumers and observed at both the market itself and sustainable farm operations. These multiple perspectives are critical to the project because I emphasize how the market actually brings farmers, consumers, and their ideas about sustainability into contact, making my observations at the market central to understanding the data from both consumers and farmers.

As I noted previously, this project examines how the ideals of social sustainability are put into practice by consumers and farmers of sustainable food in a society where social injustices are often embedded on both a structural and individual level. For example how do consumers conceptualize their participation in the market? How do consumers understand people who do not shop at the market? What social location did farmers have before becoming a sustainable farmer? Do class and educational privileges shape a farmer's commitment to project of sustainability? Does the presentation of sustainability at the market create a space that privileges particular consumers or farmers?

Who is constructed as the "ideal" consumer at the market and what consumer seems most "welcome" in that space?

To answer these questions, this project uses a number of methods that are outlined in this chapter. I begin by discussing my observations at the market and interviews with consumers there. I then discuss the interview and observation methods I used with the farmers in this study. I follow this with a discussion of my use of grounded theory, an important methodological perspective that emphasizes interaction and the meanings created by those interactions. Given the importance of space and interaction at the market to my analysis of sustainable agriculture, grounded theory provides a key framework for my research. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of what it means to be a feminist researcher using a qualitative, ethnographic research method to answer my research questions.

Interviewing at and Observing the Market

Participant observation is a research method where the researcher immerses oneself in particular social environment to understand the how that space operates. Participant observation at a Northwest Farmers' Market was my primary method. I observed 7-10 times per month for 2-3 hours at a time beginning in April and running through September of 2008; my observations were sometimes limited from mid-June through mid-July due to teaching responsibilities. I observed on different days and during different time periods to get a better sense of the ebb and flow of consumers and farmers. Thus, one day I observed during the set up period, one day during the middle of

the day, another time when the market was being packed up. During my observations I took notes in a field notebook. The notes included everything from unusual events I observed to the mundane tasks that seemed rather unspectacular. I also made maps of the market during different days and noted the apparent race and gender of the vendors. Some days my notes were relatively sparse and other days I filled pages, although it was always difficult trying to decide when to write and when to observe.

Often I felt quite awkward standing around the market day after day watching people go about what is a fairly routine activity—buying groceries. As Wax (1986) notes, one must be willing to feel out of place, embarrassed, and even "treated like a fool not only for a day or week but for months on end" to fully engage in participant observation (370).

I attempted to be an overt observer. I did not hide my field notebook or my voice recorder. I also participated in the market as much as I could—buying produce and trying to get into the mindset of a consumer. At the time of my research I was on food stamps, and I found the experience of using food stamps at the market to be a source of valuable material. I was surprised by how cumbersome the process was; some vendors had no idea how to use them, and I had to teach them how to accept them, but I also found that all the vendors I bought from seemed genuinely accepting of their use at the market.

I also found myself spending a fair amount of time in the elevated parking lot behind the market where there was more shade and a different vantage point to watch the comings and goings of the market. Often I went to this elevated lot hoping to be filled

with a moment of inspiration that would help pull all my observations together into a single, unifying idea. Occasionally, a vendor would turn around and see me standing there with my notebook and I would feel like a voyeur, but through the process of interviewing consumers and doing farm visits I became more familiar with many of the farmers. Word seem to have spread that the woman wandering around with a notebook and audio recorder was just one of the many strange things at the market that become "normal."[1]

In addition to my observations at the market, I conducted 44 short, structured interviews with 48 consumers at the market (four interviews were with couples that either wanted to be interviewed together or ended up both answering the questions during the interviews). The interviews lasted about 10 minutes and all but two of the consumers agreed to be audio recorded (to see the interview schedule for consumers see Appendix A). The interviews included demographic questions, questions about the consumers' history at the market, and general impressions of the space and the food for sale. These consumers were selected using purposeful, convenience sampling. As noted, in four cases I ended up interviewing two people rather than one—for example, someone's husband would wander up during an interview and they would both answer my questions. While transcribing and coding these interviews I was careful to note who was speaking.

I attempted to select a diverse demographic sample of market goers and was particularly attuned to race, gender, class, parental status, and age, although clearly not all

[1] Of course, the man dressed in head-to-toe tie-dye sporting a large parrot on his shoulder routinely wandered the market and no one ever seemed to notice his presence either, which did help me put my situation in some perspective.

of these factors can be discovered before an interview. I attempted, however, to get a wide variety of people. The 48 people interviewed included eight University of Oregon students, eight people in their 20s, eight people in their 30s, six people in their 40s, eight people in their 50s, six people in their 60s, one woman in her seventies, and one woman in her eighties. I interviewed 32 women and 16 men. Finding an equal number of men and women to interview was challenging for two primary reasons: the first was that men were much more likely to either say no to an interview or to call over a wife or female partner and say, "she really knows a lot more about this stuff, she'll talk to you"; the second was that there were more women at the market, particularly during the Tuesday and Thursday markets. I take both the gender imbalance in the number of consumers as well as less willingness on the part of male consumers to be interviewed as data in my analysis. Interestingly both consumers who agreed to be interviewed but refused to be audio recorded were older males.

I was continually surprised by how difficult it was to find men, particularly older men, who were willing to be interviewed. It was not just men, however, who refused my request for an interview; most people cited either a lack of time or said that they didn't know enough about the subject to agree to an interview. In total, I would estimate that at least half of the people I approached for an interview refused to be interviewed. Generally, I would approach consumers who seemed to be taking a break from their shopping, either sitting on a bench or standing on the sidewalk, and would tell them I was a graduate student writing my dissertation on farmers' markets. I would ask to interview them and tell them the interviews were very short. Some days were particularly easy and

I would have no rejections and quickly finish two interviews; other days I would approach three or four people before I secured a single interview. Furthermore, despite my attempts to get a racially diverse group of respondents, I ended up with only six interviews with people who described themselves as something other than white. This is due to a lack of people of color at the market to interview as well as some language difficulties. On a number of occasions I approached consumers of color who stated that they did not speak English. In all cases, I believe these were people of Asian or Hispanic descent.

Interviews as a research method proved to be a useful addition to my observations for a number of reasons. First, one simply cannot observe all the important details of a person or an occupation. Observation allows a researcher to examine the present and perhaps make inferences about the past and future. But by asking people directly about their lives, their experiences, their beliefs, one's research develops an additional layer of context for what is observed. Furthermore, the interviews allowed me access to information that is not readily available through observation. Demographic information as well as people's own understandings and the meaning they create are accessible through interviews but not necessarily through participant observation. Thus, in building a more complete picture about the market I was able to ask questions regarding race, gender, education, age, income, and belief systems in order to examine how they all come together.

Farm Visits and Interviews with Farmers

In addition to my observations and interviews at the market I also completed eight interviews with farmers. Seven of these interviews also included farm tours and observations. The interviews usually lasted one and a half hours with an additional hour for the tour. I had an interview schedule (see appendix B) that I used during the farm interviews, but during the tours I simply asked to see the farms and asked questions about the operations. The interviews with the farmers were all audio recorded; my observations from tours were recorded in my field notebook.

Most of my farm observations took place during the fall of 2008 and winter of 2009 with a few happening in summer of 2008. My first interview was with a woman who ran a sustainable goat dairy whom I met at the market during my early weeks of observations. From there, the farmers I interviewed were mostly selected using snowball sampling. After my farm visits I would ask for the names of other people I could interview and would then follow up with a thank you card that again mentioned wanting to speak with other farmers. This normally elicited a name and phone number of a new contact.

While I did not have many farmers who explicitly refused to be interviewed, I did find it difficult to find farmers to interview. In part this was because I was able to conduct these interviews during the summer when I was not teaching, but this is when the farmers were the busiest with their farms. Just the same, I received almost no outright refusals; instead most farmers initially either never responded to my calls or found other ways of saying no to an interview. For example, I might get a number of a farmer at the

market and then call them, set up an interview, and then when I called to confirm the interview the night before I would find out that they actually were not willing to be interviewed that day. For example, one woman I wanted to interview wanted to change the interview date because it was snowing—even though I was driving to her and assured her that I am quite willing and able to drive in two inches of snow. I rescheduled the interview, called the night before to double check about the interview only to be told she had decided to go to Hawaii. At this point I gave her my number and asked her to call when she returned because I felt that perhaps she was feeling pressured and this was her not-so-subtle way of saying to leave her alone. Apparently it was—she never called me back. This process of finding farmers was riddled with these kinds of examples—one farmer called to cancel an interview less than an hour before because he said, "his wife didn't want him to do it." Overall, about half of the farmers I approached for an interview ended up not being interviewed for one reason or another. I could not find a particular pattern in the refusal—some who refused ran large, well-known farms and other ran small start-ups. In general, the farmers who refused often seemed similar to the ones who I interviewed.

Furthermore, while I had initially hoped to interview some of the vendors at the market who were not white, mostly immigrants from Laos, language difficulties proved difficult to overcome. When I approached one family about participating in an interview I was told I could interview their daughter the following week because her English was the strongest. I was a bit unsure about this as the daughter looked to be about 8-10 years old, but came back the following week to find that they had not brought their daughter

with them. Once again I took this as a sign that they would prefer not to be interviewed and, based on a general sense of nervousness on the part of the farmers, I decided to not pursue this further. It was always a difficult call when to decide to leave a farmer alone. In general I tried to reach out to them three times before I crossed them off my list.

Despite these difficulties, I interviewed a good sample of the most prominent farmers in the area—when I mentioned whom I had previously interviewed to one well-connected farmer he shook his head and seemed genuinely impressed with the list. Specifically, I conducted interviews at eight farms. Some of the farmers ran well-known, prominent farms and others had small operations and were still working on finding their specific niche. Of these farms, heterosexual couples ran six of them, a woman who was somewhat recently single ran one, and one farm was operated as a nonprofit and was managed by a married man. Thus, at many of the farms I actually ended up interviewing a couple rather than the "farmer." Throughout my transcription I was careful to note who was talking during my transcriptions. Of the farmers I interviewed three of the couples had moved the area in the last five years to start the farms; three of the couples had been farming in the area for over fifteen years. Interestingly, only one of the farmers had grown up in what might be considered an agriculture setting. They tended to be well educated; all had at least some college education. All the farmers I interviewed described themselves as white, except for the partner of one farmer who described herself as having a "mother from Okinawa."

The farmers I chose were all small-scale farms that I would describe as "sustainable," however, not all the farmers that I interviewed sold their products at the

farmers' market. This was a conscious decision on my part because I was interested in discovering differences between the farms that grew for the market and other farms. Of the farmers I interviewed who did not sell at the market, one ran a CSA and had a farm stand, the other ran a non-profit farm for the local food bank, sold a small number of CSA shares, and ran a farm stand.

Each of my interviews with the farmers was digitally recorded and all potentially relevant material transcribed word for word. Any material that did not seem remotely relevant to the project was summarized with the beginning and end times noted so that I could easily refer back to the material if necessary. (I like to build a bit of rapport with my respondents, so sometimes we end up talking about the flowers in the garden, the dog's unusual spot pattern or other material that does not usually end up in the analysis.) The interviews mostly took place on the farms with the exception of one interview that I conducted at the market and one interview that I did over the phone. Both these interviews lacked farm visits because the farmers said they did not have time to conduct a tour. After all the interviews and farm visits I also made notes either in my field notebook or on my audio recorder. These notes included details about things like the setting of the interviews and the demeanor and appearance of the respondents as well as information and details about the farm, such as what they had growing, who I noticed working there, and anything else that seemed relevant.

I found that the interviews and the farm visits worked particularly well because I found that farmers were often much more comfortable walking around and talking about their crops than they were just sitting at a table talking. While some were clearly more

comfortable being interviewed than others, the tours often put me at ease and helped me ask more specific questions. I was very familiar with my interview schedule so that it was unnecessary to constantly refer to it. I knew which questions I wanted to include but tried not to stay too wedded to the questions printed on the page. I worked particularly hard at listening and asking follow-up questions. I found I developed decent rapport and the farmers seemed willing to talk with me. While my observations at the market were often tinged with a feeling of awkwardness, I always found the farm visits and farmer interviews to be a wonderful experience. The farmers I interviewed were without fail generous with their time and the kind of people whose presence feels life affirming. It was often the feeling I had after my farmer interviews that allowed me to return to the task of collecting data at the market.

"Pick-A-Farmer"

Along with observations at the market and on farms, I also attended the 2008 and 2009 "Pick-a-Farmer" events. The event is organized by churches in the area and brings together potential consumers with farmers who are selling shares of their CSA. The farmers set up booths to introduce their farms to consumers, and the farmers are generally celebrated and thanked for their work in the community. This event was useful because it allowed me to see the ways that the farms are marketed to consumers and the way sustainable agriculture is framed. During the two events I attended, I took field notes and chatted with the farmers and consumers. While this event is not central to my project, I did find it useful because the farmers are not selling their produce or products at the event

but instead are selling shares of their CSA. It really is about being able to market the farm and the idea of sustainable agriculture rather than a specific food item. Thus it was interesting and useful to see how the farmers were presented to the consumers and how the consumers responded to the event. It provided an event outside the market itself to do observations; however, as this is a yearly event my observations here were clearly limited as are my discussions of the events.

Grounded Theory

The basis for this dissertation is original data collected primarily beginning in the spring of 2008 through the spring of 2009. Specifically, the approach used in my dissertation is grounded theory, an inductive research method where the analytical categories are grounded in the data itself (as opposed to constructing categories prior to researching and then analyzing the data in terms of the preconstructed categories). I found Charmaz's (2006) book, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, to be a particularly useful methodological tool and referred to it throughout the research process.

As Charmaz (2006) notes, "grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (10). This makes her discussion of grounded theory a valuable tool in answering my research question because it acknowledges a constructionist perspective and, importantly, focuses on understanding the meanings that are created through interactions. Through this emphasis on interactions, grounded theory allows me to examine how different values in sustainable food are manifested and how these values are based in ideologies and

structures that are gendered, racialized and classed. Furthermore, I believe it also allows me to examine the complexities and paradoxes of the farmers' market as a space of sustainable agriculture, a space that is both a reaction to the exploitive systems of industrial agriculture and a system that is forced to operate nonetheless within a capitalist, market system. The space of the market is based on an ideology of competition yet it is also a space where the tenets of this alterative system often stress cooperation. Grounded theory and qualitative methods allow me as a researcher to explore the ways that the minutia of the everyday world is deconstructed or reproduced, sustained or delegitimated within this complex space of sustainable agriculture.

In part, I think that I have always intuitively used a grounded theory approach to my research, but Charmaz's discussion of grounded theory validated my approach as a researcher and also gave me a grammar with which to describe my process. Furthermore, her step-by-step discussion of grounded theory gave me a road map for collecting and analyzing my data. Using grounded theory I began the process of analyzing the data at the same time as I gathered it. My research and this process was not a linear one; instead my research question became more focused as my research progressed and in the process my interviews and observations also became more focused. The ideas and theories that are formed while gathering data then focus and direct further data collection. Thus, it was during my observations and interviews that I began thinking critically about my data, constructing rudimentary codes, and allowing my project to take shape. This project began primarily as a study in gender and sustainable agriculture, but in the field I noticed

issues that were also racialized and classed, and so I opened the project up to include these issues.

Through the use of grounded theory and the process of coding, a number of themes repeated in my interviews and I was able to build from those themes. My interviews and the observations were intimately connected and thus not separate phases of the project. The interviews changed the focus of my observation and what I observed shaped the questions I asked. I see the interviews and observations as two methods that are mutually reinforcing, and thus my interviews sent me back to the field and my observations required further interviews.

The analysis of my observations and interviews began with memo writing and coding. During the research process I wrote memos based on my observations and interviews in an attempt to develop my theoretical codes. The purpose of the memo writing was to record and process ideas while I was still in the field. It is also a way to develop the theoretical connections. The memo writing became an intermediate step between data collecting and drafting the chapter, because it became a means to understanding the data.

I coded my field notes and transcribed consumer farmer and consumer interviews using a question-by-question analysis in order to begin to explore the themes that developed. First, I read through all my transcripts and developed an initial list of codes based on my first reading. Then, using that initial list, I applied these codes to the interviews by reading them again and applying the codes I had originally developed or adding new codes if necessary. I then put this coded data into databases where I

organized data from the respondent and included their verbatim quotes that I had coded into each category. This initial coding and organizing led to a more focused coding; this focused coding often used more of the theoretical categories that emerged during the question-by-question analysis as well as the memo writing.

My observations and analysis are also guided by West and Zimmerman's (1987) conceptualization of "doing gender." They are argue that "gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort" (6). They claim that gender is an accomplishment that happens in interaction with others and in interaction with institutions, not simply an individualized performance or behavior. Their theory of "doing gender" has guided this project. While West and Zimmerman's theory specifically applies to gender, I have used the tenets of their theory throughout my research process. This is in part because my field site, like the larger world, is a place where gender intersects with other social locations. It became clear almost immediately that I simply could not talk about gender without also talking about race, class, and sexual orientation. Yet throughout my research I kept returning to West and Zimmerman's ideas and a guiding force. It was West and Zimmerman's ideas about "social doings" that happen in interaction that pushed me to use an ethnographic approach in my research.

This focus on interaction, however, has been critiqued by a number of scholars including Collins (2002), who argues that the constructionist paradigm Fenstermaker and West use obscures the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. Moreover, Weber (2002) argues that, "West and Zimmerman obscure rather than

illuminate the mechanisms of power in the production and maintenance of racism, classism, and sexism. For race, class, and gender scholarship, social relations of dominance/control and subordination/resistance are the cornerstones of theory" (89).

While the critiques of Fenstermaker and West are important, I tend to agree with Fenstermaker's and West's reply to such critiques (2002b), which asserts that a focus on interaction does not necessary mean that mechanisms of power and oppression are ignored. Certainly, power and inequality are established at multiple levels through interaction. Their focus on a more micro-level understanding of oppression is important and does not need to obscure larger structural forces. Furthermore, Glenn (1999) makes a similar suggestion, noting that race and gender share three key features: they are relational (they gain meaning in relation to each other), they have a social structure, and they are tied with power, connecting the interaction of race, class, and gender on an individual level with social structures (9).

An ethnographic approach is important because it is a way to explore the mechanisms of inequality; rather than simply saying that inequality exists, ethnography is a way of untangling inequality and understanding where it comes from and what ideologies are used to justify it. Thus West and Zimmerman (1987) note that gender inequality is maintained through everyday interactions. Through gendered interactions that are considered natural and normal, "we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex categories" (22). These social arrangements are based on rewards and punishments that by their very nature are supposed to be unnoticed on any distinguishable level. If a woman does

gender appropriately, she may receive more eye contact from those around her, more consolatory gestures. If she is unable or unwilling to do gender appropriately, those gestures and glances will change in a way that will make it clear that she has personally failed to maintain the requirements of the social system, at which time she must decide whether or not to adjust her behavior. The further one deviates from these "natural" and "normal" arrangements, the larger the consequences for that individual—rarely is the gender system questioned.

Through my research I would argue that that race, class, and sexual inequality are also produced, and sometime delegitimized, through systems of interaction. Given this emphasis on interaction, therefore, ethnography is a valuable method because it allows me to observe the ways gender, race, and class are constructed and interpreted by the participants. Furthermore, using grounded theory to guide my qualitative study of markets provided rich data with which to work.

Conclusion: A Feminist Approach

It is worth noting that my reasons for choosing qualitative methods as well as my focus on intersectional issues are motivated by my feminist politics. It is my belief that at least in some superficial way interviews will allow those who are being researched to have some "voice" in the project as I pursue a kind of feminist ethnography that challenges hierarchal power structures. A number of scholars have questioned whether there can be a feminist ethnography given the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched (Stacey 1988); Abu-Lughod 1990), and a common solution offered regarding

this issue is the practice of collaborative research. In this model of ethnography, the researcher and the subjects work together to create a project that attempts to explore a certain aspect of the lived world and gives the people in that world a voice in the interpretations or knowledge produced. While a number of problems with this type of open and collaborative research have been offered that complicate collaboration as a solution, many argue that collaborative work is a viable and obvious solution available to ethnographers concerned about issues of power and positionality.

However, given the academy's structure for dissertations that emphasizes individual authorship, it was not possible to produce a piece of collaborative work for this project. Just the same, a number of farmers that I interviewed asked to see a copy of my finished work, and I plan to distribute a copy to them post defense. Of course, this is quite different than allowing them to participate in the process of creating this dissertation; just the same, throughout this process knowing that they will at least have the opportunity to read the final project pushed me to approach this project with a level of concern and fairness that I believe becomes more pronounced if those who are researched have access to the project. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that I have control and responsibility for what is presented and not presented here. I have attempted in my work to be open and reflexive about my power as a researcher.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that I—like all researchers regardless of method—come at this project with a particular standpoint that affects the ways I see the world. This standpoint shapes the questions I ask and even the data that is the most salient to my work. This is not to say that other scholars would likely find results

different from mine, or that my results are not grounded in the data. However, while I am a researcher who strives to create an accurate picture of the world I observe, I am nonetheless a researcher with a particular history and perspective, one that filters my view of the world I research.

Throughout the process I felt a pronounced tension because my relationship to sustainable agriculture and to the farmers and consumers often felt very contradictory. First, the power imbalance between my respondents and me was much more muted than in previous projects. The vast majority of the people I interviewed were highly educated and extremely well versed in the subjects we discussed, and I rarely felt like I was in a position of power. These feelings were often exacerbated by imbalances in gender and age. I was often much younger than the people I was interviewing and as a youngish woman interviewing older often male farmers, the power imbalance seemed particularly complex. My own feelings ranged from being very comfortable and having a seemingly equitable rapport with my subjects to feeling that I was an idiot who could not manage to secure an interview. In fact, I sometimes felt a real tension between my own feelings of vulnerability in the field and Wolf's (1996) argument that, "the most central dilemma for contemporary feminists in fieldwork…is the power and the unequal hierarchies or levels of control that are often maintained, perpetuated, created and re-created during and after field research" (2). Frankly, sometimes I felt a little like I must be doing something wrong because I could not ever quite manage to feel that I had much control during this process.

Furthermore, I felt a constant sense of unease at the market that I could not shake. In fact, I was partially motivated to undertake this project because of the contradictory feelings I have about sustainable agriculture. As the daughter of a "conventional" rancher I sometimes felt that both the consumers and farmers were unfairly villainizing and often mischaracterizing what was an important part of my family's history. This is not to say that there aren't many parts of it that I might also critique, but it can be somewhat difficult to hear. Additionally, I often looked around the market and felt like there were many people in my family who would love to eat a delicious tomato or peach but would never venture to a farmers' market because, justified or not, they just would not feel comfortable or welcome in that space. In John Deere hats and with a penchant for "regular" food, I could really never envision my brother buying, or trying to pronounce, arugula. Despite this I often found myself at the market feeling as though participation in sustainable agriculture was important for environmental and social reasons. So I suppose I felt a tension between my particular past and heritage and my particular future—a future which will likely include the trappings of the educated middle-class which tends to include things like farmers' market produce.

Perhaps because of these contradictory outlooks, I feel a real sense of responsibility for what is produced from my research. I understand that I have a responsibility to produce work that is reflective of the data I collected, work that treats the consumers and farmers that I interviewed fairly. As an ethnographic researcher I recognize that I am part of those data, that my history and philosophy will shape this particular dissertation. This dissertation is the product of a particular time, place and

paradigm; this paper is a product of my struggle with my own positionality—one of power and of powerlessness. Ultimately as I became more immersed in my research I reminded myself that ultimately what is perhaps most important is that this is a text that "knows its politics" (Mascia-Lees 1989:8).

CHAPTER IV

THE FARMERS

The farm visits and interviews with farmers were the highlight of my research. It was quite difficult to find farmers who were willing to give me a part of their hectic day for my research; however, the ones that did were passionate, thoughtful and engaged people. I admired them for their commitment. This chapter examines sustainable farming and the patterns I found across my interviews and observations with sustainable farmers. I was struck throughout my research by the differences among the farms that fell within a broad definition of "sustainable." The common denominator in the term "sustainability" seemed to be an underlying belief that industrial agriculture is polluting our environment and our bodies. "Sustainable agriculture" is a way of building solidarity between these farms, yet beyond that the farms are quite different. Though many of the farms used bio-dynamic principles—a farming method developed by Rudolph Steiner which sees the farm as a holistic system—some found the bio-dynamic process of making compost tinctures (by burying specific herbs in specific animal parts, an intestine or horn, for example) bizarre. Some biked their produce around town to avoid using fossil fuels, while others used bio-diesel, and others believed that the use of fossil fuels was a necessary evil that allowed them to distribute tons of food that had been produced

sustainably. The farmers took different philosophical approaches to farming and brought different experiences and different resources. The idea of "sustainability," however, was a term that tied the farms together and gave them a critical mass. This concept gave consumers a sense of choice at the market and the farmers a sense of community.

This chapter is primarily based on research I conducted at eight farms. One of these eight farms, Mountain Glen Dairy, was primarily a dairy goat operation run by Wendy, a young single mother who built her dairy from a herd her mother-in-law had originally bred. For a woman who shared that she worked 120 hours a week and was raising her two children by herself, she struck me as amazingly calm. She met me by my car and we walked through the farm on the kind of day that was so hot your clothes stick to your skin. The farm was dry and a bit tired looking, but as Wendy spoke about her dreams for the place my vision of it also shifted. We toured the dairy with its milking room and cheese making room as well as the gardens and pastures and I could see the farm that she saw as it matured in the years to come.

Two farms were livestock and dairy operations. Winding Road Meat and Dairy was run by a middle-aged couple, Claire and Peter, who had moved from the East Coast a few years earlier with their children to start the farm. It was located on the top of a gently sloping hill, and when Claire met me at my car she noted my car seat in the back seat and immediately asked to see a picture of my son. The rest of the interview proceeded like a friendly conversation as we walked around the farm. Claire was the mother of five and had grown up in a farming family. When we met it was early fall and the weather was beautiful. I was able to pet the cows and meet the children as they went about their

chores on the farm. The setting was nothing less than idyllic. The other livestock and dairy operation, a small homestead farm called Dogwood Poultry that sells primarily chickens and turkeys at market, is run by Yvette and her husband Jarrett, a young couple. When I met Yvette for the interview she already had been out for a long run and was filled with a natural high energy. We sat in her living room where she was brewing large tubs of apple cider. Her excitement and seeming joy with her life energized the room. She shared her love of the smell of butchering chickens (which her husband found disgusting) and her self-taught hobby: taxidermy. I had silently noted the number of furs around the room, but the it was not until she noted that the smell in the room was that of the baby screech owl she had found on the road defrosting by the fire (she froze it until she was ready to begin) that I learned the full extent of her hobby. She showed me the fox in her bedroom and the rest of the interview progressed in a similar high energy and slightly disjointed fashion.

Three of the farmers I interviewed raised a large range of foods, producing everything from fruits and vegetable to eggs to meat. Opal and Jack are a middle-aged couple that had originally moved to the area 18 years earlier and had farmed throughout the valley in different locations. Their farm was unique in that the two of them delivered all their food, 20-tons a year, by bike. Their life emphasized the happiness that could be found in living simply. Besides not owning a car, their home looked to be less than 400 square feet. Their young son rode his bike and Jack worked in the backfield as Opal and I toured the farms. Their commitment to being part of a sustainable community was clear and their conviction could be seen in every facet of life they had created for themselves.

At Horse Sense Farm, Jeff and Penny did the majority of the farming using draft horses and Jeff also worked as a successful professional in town. Jeff showed me around the farm with a reserved, serious demeanor. The farm that he and Penny had built was meticulously kept—even during the winter it was beautiful. Their home was large and beautifully constructed, and as the three of us sat down for a cup of tea Penny said to ignore the clutter; perhaps it is more a testament to my own sense of clutter, but the home simply felt warm and lived in to me. Sam and Janine at To Your Health Farm had been farming for 30 years, the longest of anyone I interviewed. Their farm did seem genuinely cluttered to me, but as Sam pointed out items that he saved to build a piece of machinery and piece of wood that would make a fine refuge for the birds, it was clear that it was a functional farm. As we sat down for a cup of tea I sat and watched what seemed like hundreds of beautiful little birds descend on the feeders and flowers around the house, and it struck me how this farm worked in tandem with the natural environment; it was a place where native birds still thrived.

The final two producers I interviewed grew primarily produce. Zeb and Denise at Bountiful Farms grew primarily produce and nursery plants and had been in the area 17 years. Zeb had earned an advanced degree in the social sciences; he described himself as a cynic and then lived up to his own label. Our conversations often went far afield. We would discuss pre-agricultural societies and the carbon footprints of air travel, but I found these conversations particularly helpful in my thinking about this project as it was hard for me to ask a question that Zeb had not already given a great deal of thought to. And as I watched Zeb at the market debating another producer about bio-dynamic practices it

helped make it clear that there is no party line for sustainability—that this is a system that is in flux and that is being actively constructed. Finally, I interviewed Phil who worked for a salary at an urban farm owned by the Food Bank that produced food that was mostly given to the food bank. We sat outside in the cold of winter at a picnic table and as I interviewed him a number of people stopped by the farm to ask questions about buying shares from their CSA or to ask where the shovels should go. Phil mentioned a number of times how little farming he often gets to do and how much his position entailed people managing. During our time together this point was made over and over by frequent interruptions. Despite this, he was friendly and engaged. Furthermore, that he farmed for a nonprofit farm often stood in contrast to the other farmers who were for profit; this interview offered an important point of comparison for my research.

Using my interviews and farm visits, this chapter explores a number of points that I found during the course of my research. I begin by exploring the ways that farmers negotiate the demands of the market system, examining how the aesthetically-pleasing presentation of the farms at the market is often in stark contrasts to the material realities of farming. Next I explore the ways that farms deal with the tensions between their idealized visions of sustainable farming and their lived experience of implementing these visions within a capitalist agricultural system. Additionally, I explore how education and class are related to a farmer's ability to farm. Using this idea, I examine how class and education privileges may allow these farmers to farm by subsidizing the food they sell with their off farm income. Finally, I examine how women's success in farming is often

tied to heterosexual marriage and how the feminization of farm labor seems to defy common logic about farming and gender.

The Construction of Food at the Market Versus the Farms

During my interviews and tours with the farmers, the tensions between sustainable agriculture as an ideal and sustainable agriculture as it is practiced became an immediate source of discussion. These tensions and contradictions were often invisible to the consumers at the market, in part because of the ways that the market was structured. My observations and interviews with the farmers suggested that these farmers were deeply attuned to these tensions and reflexive about their practices as they negotiated their ideal vision of sustainable farming and their actfual practice of it.

One of the first tensions I observed was between the aesthetically beautiful tables and images of the market and the practical realities of farming, which is often a dirty business. For example, when I visited Mountain Glen Dairy at the end of a dry Oregon summer the ground in the goat pens were bare and parched. The owner, Wendy, was feeding the goats hay and garden greens and waiting for Oregon's rain to green the dairy. Outside the milking parlor does bucked and waited for their turn at the milking stanchion. Walking into the dairy barn, I was overwhelmed with the buzzing of flies and the humming of milking machines that filled the room along with the musky odor of goats. I observed one woman wrangling the goats in place and another cleaning their teats and attaching the cups of the milking machine. The parlor was a small room where up to eight goats could be milked at a time. The stanchions were elevated making the udders

about waist high. Not surprisingly given the room full of goats, it was not particularly clean in this section of the dairy.

The milking parlor where I entered was separated from the cheese making operation by a series of rooms: one held a large stainless steel vat for storing and separating the milk. Next was a room filled with the mechanical equipment, vitamins and tinctures for goat ailments. Finally, we came to a small room filled with large coolers where goat cheese was aged, and attached to that was the room where the milk was turned into the cheese that was sold at the farmer's market. A woman stood carefully wrapping pyramids of cheese in brown paper, a signature of Mountain Glen Diary. As we walked from room to room Wendy explained how everything operated, how she had worked to design and build the dairy. It was a well thought out, impressive operation. Yet, despite my best efforts, I could not get over the flies; each room had fewer than the next but they were still everywhere. In the mechanical room dark ribbons of flypaper plastered with flies did very little to control the buzzing, although by the time we reached the cheese-making room only a very few remained.

At another farm, Dogwood Poultry, which is focused on selling chickens and turkeys, Yvette described the chickens as "Franken-chickens" when I commented on their rather unfortunate appearance. She explained that because these fast growing meat chickens are bred to put all their energy into meat production, a side effect is that their hind-ends are nearly featherless. Confronted with these semi-feathered, rather unsightly looking creatures, who I was told had to have their food taken away at night to keep them from eating themselves to death, it occurred to me that this is not exactly how I would

imagine a $5.00 a pound chicken looking. It certainly was a far cry from the images of "free-range" chickens that often show up on a farm website.

At Good Taste Farm the mushroom growing room was nothing short of creepy (and fascinating). It was a long dark building filled with hanging black garbage bags as well as hardwood logs that had been inoculated with mushroom spores, and it had the dank, earthy smell of compost. Yet, these parts of the production process are often excluded from the images used to sell the food. Yvette at Dogwood Poultry commented as I was leaving her farm that "it's funny because I think they [the consumers] think farmers are … living like pictures from Hobby Farmer magazine and whenever there are publications written about sustainable farming they are totally glammed up, you know? They're like 'Oh, let's take a picture of the lavender plants and the smiling farmer' and the farmer puts on a nice shirt for the picture, instead of one with holes in the shoulders and stuff, you know? I don't think it's glamorous." This point suggests the ways that the realities of producing sustainable food are often hidden behind images that romanticize the experiences of producing that food. Furthermore, these kinds of images hide the real labor that goes into producing the food. Similar to the ways that the shiny presentations of food at the grocery store erases any reminders of who picked that food, these kinds of images only show a particular visions of sustainability.

I want to be very clear that while the flies, "Franken-chickens," and mushroom room were not the images that the farms used to sell their foods, I did not observe anything at any of the farms that struck me as even remotely questionable in terms of the health of the food. These are the material realities of farming and at any of the farms I

would have happily eaten any one of these foods. Yet there were clear differences between what it takes to produce food and sell it. For example the thick waves of flies in the air and the little pebbles of goat manure littering the floor of the milking parlor at Mountain Glen Dairy were a rather stark contrast from the Mountain Glen table at the farmer's market. Their stand is quite small, but it is set up to evoke an idyllic pastoral scene. A single table is spread with a yellow printed tabled cloth on which wrapped pyramids of cheese are displayed on ice. Each cheese pyramid is adorned with a watercolor label of goats standing in a lush meadow and the even the sign displaying the name of the farm is artfully painted with a sprig of flowers tucked in the corner. The images used to sell the food and presented at the market suggest the tension between theses realties of producing food versus selling it. Consumers have come to expect a particular presentation of food and farmers often spend a great deal of time and energy marketing their foods. Clearly, it would be easier for the farmers to simply show up to the market, open up the back of a truck and sell their foods out of the cardboard boxes or the plastic tubs that they arrive to the market in. Yet, with the exception of one older woman who has been growing since the 1970s, everyone goes through the motions of constructing their stands to help construct this image of sustainability. The farmers know which images to use at the market and which part of the process is best left un-advertized.

The stands at the market—stands that farmers often set up themselves—contribute to this vision of sustainable farming and farmers as "naturally" and often effortlessly beautiful. But farming is often a dirty business; eggs occasionally end up with poop on them and tomatoes split in late summer thundershowers. The stands are often sanitized so

that much of the demanding labor of the farmers as well as the necessary processes involved with producing the food is erased. Of course, this is no different than a traditional grocery store, but sustainable agriculture, a farmers' market, is supposed to be different than a grocery store. It is supposed to bring us back "in touch" with our food and the people that grow it. Yet from what I observed the market is truly a constructed vision of sustainability, a vision that is sanitized and beautified.

Perhaps this suggests that despite the ways sustainable agriculture is constructed in opposition to conventional agriculture it is also enmeshed in the food system constructed by conventional agriculture, a system that has long worked to fetishize food and distort the relationship between labor and food. While farmers' markets and sustainable agriculture seems to reject this fetishization by working to bring back the farmer as a key figure in food production, the food is still presented in such a way that often erases the processes of producing it. Furthermore, through this process the farmer is also fetishized. As Yvette noted, the images of farmers are often sanitized and "glammed-up." While the farmers clearly have no delusions of the work involved in farming—work that they often described as physically exhausting and monotonous—these images of the farmer may further erase the labor and demands of sustainable farming.

The Farmers as Reflexive Producers

While there were clear differences between the ways food looked as it was produced on the farms and how it was presented at the market, there were other areas

where farmers were negotiating the sometimes-nebulous idea of "sustainability." In my interviews, I found that farmers were reflexive about this idea of sustainability and how to put it into practice. These decisions about how to practice were everywhere. The choices farmers grappled with included everything from how the food was delivered to consumers—some used bio-diesel in their market trucks and one farm delivered all their CSA boxes by bike—to the decisions about buying local versus organic scratch for one's chickens. Of course, to even call these "choices" or "decisions" overlooks the obvious ways that sustainable farmers operate within a set of financial, environmental, resource limitations. Thus, it is important to note that while I use this language of "choice," these are choices are made with context that limits real choice. Thus, there are limitations to farmers' practices, limitations that are often related to finances (this idea is discussed in more detail later in the chapter).

Regardless, these "choices" seemed to weigh on the farmers. Jeff noted that creating a sustainable farm is "not something you can just start out and do 100% and that's I really think a big message and learning point for me anyway is that you kind of approximate, you kind of get a little closer each time, so that's what it's all about, move that direction and you know, make a small amount of change over time that adds up to a lot, whereas if you try to do all of that at once, it would be so overwhelming."

One of the choices that weighed on farmers was "hoop houses." At the farms I visited that produced vegetables for market, it was common to see large plastic structures called "hoop houses." These structures are the shape of short Quonset huts and usually made of PVC pipe and sheets of thick clear plastic. They are used to prolong the growing

season by keeping excess rain off plants, raising the temperature, and well as protecting plants from frosts. One farmer described the amount of plastics being used in "sustainable" agriculture as its "dark, dirty secret" because the petroleum used to produce the plastic is clearly not sustainable. Yet in nearly all the operations I visited the plastic hoop houses were an integral part of their operations, housing everything from tomatoes and other vegetables to the "Franken-chickens" within them.

Similarly, while visiting Winding Road Farm, Claire shared a debate that she and her husband had about their chickens. He wanted to put them in some kind of structure so he could have a better idea of the inputs that went into producing an egg; she felt that chickens should run around and that they are not free-range if they are not completely free, even if that meant hunting for eggs and not being able to calculate inputs. When I visited, the chickens were still scattered around the farm and one had a new set of chicks following behind her from a clutch of eggs that had clearly been overlooked.

I should be clear that I am not "discovering" these contradictions. The truth is, it probably would not have occurred to me that the hoop houses were not necessarily "sustainable" because they were used with such frequency. They are simply one of the many sometimes small and sometimes not so small concessions that these farmers make. In my visits with farmers these concessions often seem to weigh heavily on their minds. The farmers that I interviewed often pointed them out to me. They were deeply invested in producing food that was environmentally sustainable. And they spoke of the ways they worked to make their farms more and more sustainable, yet in these discussions there was always a note of what they could be doing to make it better, to make their

farmer more closed-looped. Zeb was particularly focused on these contradictions, and finally said with some sense of resignation, "I gotta tell you, organic farming, I believe in it, and it's better for the land, but any farming is hard on the land and certainly there's nothing remotely natural about it. Let's face it, from an ecological standpoint, farming is a disaster. Organic farmers, if you're in business, you make a lot of expedient choices in life, and you can't do everything you might think is right."

Finally, while farmers are reflexive about the practice of sustainability on their farms, they are also reflexive about the role of class and inequality in the work they do. It was interesting that while consumers often argued that the reasons people didn't shop at the market were related to education or convenience, the farmers often were much more likely to discuss issues that were rooted in class inequality. It is certainly possible that the consumers' discussions of "convenience" or "education" were related to their understanding of the market as a classed space, yet they were much less likely to use the language of class. So while a number of the farmers mentioned issues of pricing during our interviews, only a handful of consumers mentioned price as a barrier. These farmers had to decide how to price and sell their food. The farmers were often invested in making their food affordable to a diverse set of clients, but were confronted with the realities of making enough money to support their farmers. In fact, as I discuss in more detail later in the chapter, farmers were often subsidizing their food either through well-paying off farm jobs or by essentially giving away their labor. Thus, while there was concern about the affordability of the food, farmers also had to charge enough to support themselves.

Despite this a number of farmers were negotiating these tensions between affordability and supporting themselves. Sam and Janine, for example, noted that they allowed people to pay for their CSA boxes by the month rather than all once because they realized not everyone has enough money saved up to pay for months worth of food at a time. They said that in particular this payment plan was attractive to students who belonged to the CSA. Wendy noted that she could make "hugely expensive artisan cheeses" but that she was committed to making her food available to the local community. (Yet, as a graduate student on food stamps even $7.00/lb for her cheese seemed quite pricey to me, which speaks to the ways these issues are always relative to one's specific economic situation.) Yvette, on the one hand, related that she originally was unsure how much to charge for her chickens, but was convinced by other farmers that they were worth $5.00/lb. She said, "I find that people don't even blink an eye – people don't even think about it, I'm like, 'What, that's like $200.00 bucks!' That's crazy."[2]

This concern about the availability of the food was often overshadowed by the material realities of farming and selling within a capitalist system. For example, at a number of farms that I visited during the fall, I saw row after row of tomatoes being pulled up and composted though still laden with fruit that seemed quite edible. I realized how much of a negotiation it was between pricing food so it was affordable and being careful to not saturate the market with too much of one crop and lower the value. This is something that Phil at the Food Bank Farm mentioned as a difference between his farm

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[2] Yvette's total of $200.00 was perhaps not from selling chickens, but perhaps the very large turkeys she also raised which could have easily reached 20lbs.

and others. At the Food Bank Farm almost no food is wasted; nothing is ever turned under because it does not look good enough. Instead even holey kale leaves from plants that have bolted are harvested, cut up and turned into soup. I understand the economic reasons that farmers end up turning under or composting food: for example, the tomato plants were being pulled up because it was late in the season when fewer people are buying and the market is flooded with tomatoes, making it more expensive to harvest them than they are worth. Yet seeing food essentially being thrown away is upsetting and seems contrary to my vision of sustainability; it also suggests the ways that the market system is not necessarily set up to provide the maximum amount of food to people but instead is carefully regulated to make sure that the best food makes it to market and that the market is not flooded with too many of any particular kind of food.[3]

The market manager I spoke to one day at the market first suggested this idea to me. He said one important part of his job was to make sure that they do not let too many of the same kind of vendors at the market and flood it with a particular kind of food. Berries and fruit are always a concern for this because they are high revenue producing food and very seasonal. There are lots of producers that sell only berries who want to sell at the market for a month and then disappear; this could be potentially devastating for the producers who are at the market for the full season and rely on their berry revenue to subsidize the sale of foods like zucchinis. Furthermore, without farmers at the market with zucchinis and other foods for the full season, the consumers would stop coming.

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[3] This is certainly no different from conventional agriculture where food is carefully regulated to keep prices steady, except in the case of sustainable agriculture, the government is not paying these farmers not to grow food.

Thus there is a complicated balance that is used to ensure that there is enough food to attract consumers and enough consumers to attract farmers to sell their goods.

In addition to the ways this balance is constructed at the market, many of the farmers also noted that there were other class issues involved in sustainable farming. Claire noted that most of her consumers were "educated, upper middle class, nutritionally educated; they have some money," and she noted that she was glad she had gone back to finish her college degree because that education has allowed her to relate to her customers. The farmers mostly seemed grateful that there were people who were investing in and supporting sustainable agriculture, but there was also a sense that perhaps the clientele was not as diverse as one might hope. It is such a difficult position because the farmers are already often stretched very thin; it is difficult to imagine them making any less for their food. Often they are not selling it for what it is worth (based on what the farmers are paying themselves or others for their labor), yet at the same time they seem aware of the class politics of sustainable food leaving a tension between the ideals of sustainable agriculture and the realities of supporting oneself doing it. A friend related to me that a former farmer said to her that he quit farming because, "he got tired of turning chicken-shit into rich people."

Other farmers noted the ways that class plays into the consumption of sustainable foods. Opal noted how frustrating it is for her to pedal past what she estimated were 12,000 homes that are nestled around her farm when she hauls her food by bike to the South Hills, a place of middle and upper class consumers. Zeb, a self proclaimed "socio-cultural cynic," said he thinks his consumers are more likely to be middle or upper class.

He went on to add that he thinks that this group of consumers is attracted to the farmers' market because:

> they have more fat to trim and so they can feel better about themselves and think they're really doing something even though trimming 5% from their obese lifestyle is a drop in the bucket compared to their impact overall. I mean it's just like, if you take one airplane flight in your life, you've probably blown your carbon budget and we do it constantly. It's so hypocritical, I'm going to use the reusable shopping bag in between my flight to Italy for a slow food conference, it's just not real, we're just fooling ourselves, trying to think that we can somehow maintain this lifestyle, it's way too materialistic for this Earth.

Perhaps, some of this frustration came from what seemed like contradictions at the market itself. Clearly, depending on one's values some farmers would be a better a fit than others to support. Yet during my interviews with consumers many of them noted that they liked buying food at the market because they wanted to support small farmers. The idea of a "small" farm, however, was completely relative, and during my observations at the market I was continually struck by how much more business the larger stands that sold food from the larger farms did compared to some of the very small farms with very small booths (but loads of produce). These small stands often did very little business; they had no lines, and much of their produce seemed to sit. Thus, though

consumers like the idea of small farmers, the larger ones also have more produce to choose from and often have more experience marketing their farms.

The Role of Class and Education in Sustainable Farming

Something that became apparent immediately during my interviews and farm visits was the fact the farmers tended to be well educated and had access to either well-paying jobs or jobs with flexible work schedules (or both), something that is often related to the kinds of jobs that are available to the middle and upper classes as opposed to the working class. For example, Jeff and Penny from Horse Sense Farmers and Claire and Peter at Winding Road Meat and Dairy both had a member of their family who worked at a lucrative off farm job that helped to support the farm. Having family members who take off farm jobs is common in conventional farming, but well-paying jobs that also allow the flexibility to engage in farm work are much less common in my experience. Even farmers whose off farm jobs were less lucrative, such as Yvette from Dogwood Poultry, who worked part-time as a elementary art teacher, had the kinds of jobs that provide them with the flexibility to also work at the farm.

Interestingly, although not all farmers had high paying jobs (like Yvette and Opal) they mentioned coming from well-to-do-families, something I often learned as they described how uncomfortable their families were that their well-educated children had chosen to farm. Growing up in middle and upper-middle class households is often related to the choice to farm in complex ways. For example, Opal was drawn to farming after spending many of her summers on her grandfather's farm, a farm he bought as

mostly a hobby from his job as a doctor. What struck me was that the farmers seemed to see farming as a privilege. They clearly had a firm understanding of the amount of work involved in the farming yet, they all conveyed a real love of the work they were doing. They also pointed out that the work could be exhausting and difficult, but as Opal said after a long description of what she appreciated about her life as a farmer: "that's a long way to say, I can't possibly work in an office, it would drive me crazy."

Those that did not have the same educational or financial resources because they did not have college degrees had come to sustainable farming in various ways. For example, Wendy who ran Mountain Glen Dairy took over the dairy she had been managing when she married the son of the family she had been working for. Though the son/husband was no longer in the picture, her access to the land was through this relationship of marriage. Sam at To Your Health Farm, who also did not have a college education, had been farming on his land for nearly 30 years, over a decade longer than anyone else I interviewed, when land was much cheaper.

In my interviews with the sustainable farmers I found them to be down-to-earth, forthcoming, and in general quite friendly. Yet, I found their responses tended to be measured, which is not say that I that they did not open up during the interviews to share their views, experiences, and authentic ideas, but that a few of the farmers seemed somewhat formal. For example, Jeff who ran Horse Sense Farms avoided telling me about his prestigious professional job until the very end of the interview and even kidded me about getting a PhD during the interview. Nonetheless, I was not particularly surprised to find that out that in my small sample there was a practicing medical doctor, a

farmer with a PhD in Anthropology and a farmer with an Ivy League undergraduate education as well as a Master's degree in Art. In fact, only two of the farmers I interviewed did not have at least a college degree; however, both of them had taken college credits and one joked that he had accumulated enough credits over the years to earn a PhD—something I didn't doubt after talking to him as our conversations moved between discussing the role of physics in plant growth to theoretical discussions of economic inequality.

Farmers linked their educational attainment to their ability to farm in a number of ways during our interviews. Opal, who has a Master's Degree in Art and comes from a well-to-do family said quite plainly, "a lot of it is privilege, it takes a lot of money to get on a piece of land if you don't own it and people with that kind of privilege are not poor, they're not people who can't afford to go to college." The ability to buy land, particularly at a time when land prices are quite high, is clearly a classed privilege in the same way college is often also a classed privilege. In general the farmers were very aware—even without me actually asking a question about class and farming—that a desire to farm was usually not enough, that one had to have some ability to procure land in order to farm.

Phil from the Food Bank Farm helped make this point quite clearly when he began discussing the program for at-risk youth that he helps runs during the summer at The Food Bank Farm. The program primarily targets children of the poor, which he says sometimes brings together an eclectic mix of the kids of who grew up in Oregon "hippie families" who have a "completely different world view" than low income kids who grow

up in working-class logging towns. These young people spend the summer interning for a small stipend while learning farm and life skills. During the summer at the farm, Phil noted, the young people who work for him often grow to love farming, yet he does not know anyone who has gone into farming themselves because as he explained, "low income kids, they're not going to be starting farms, most of them, you got to have a lot of money to start a farm, there's a few [farmers] that have worked their butts off to get where they are but a lot of them have had the land covered or have somebody in the family, there's definitely some backing that's allowed them to become viable operations, starting from scratch is not a business that any person can start." This is perhaps something that Phil understands particularly well as he is one of only two farmers that I interviewed who did not own the land they were farming.

Interestingly, the farmers also pointed out that it was not just access to land that was related to class and income. As a number of farmers pointed out, the more income and wealth a farmer has, the more sustainable they are able to make their farms. For example, Claire noted that the farmers she knew that were the most sustainable, "are independently wealthy or they just live extremely simply, which is interesting to me, that you basically have to be rich to farm, really. Some of these farmers have well paying off farm jobs that allowed them to purchase the land to farm." Claire went on to note that her husband's well paying consulting job was essential in supporting the farm.

During my farm visits I found these comments to be particularly salient. All the farmers I interviewed were working to make their farms more and more sustainable, even those who felt the term itself had lost its meaning. It was clear that the farmers see

the farms as growing, changing organisms. During the tours of the farms, farmers would show me what was growing but always included what they were going to do—next year they would produce more animal fodder, they would turn this field into blueberries. Yet the farms of those who had some kind of measurable off farm income seemed to be a more appreciably closed system; for example, they were more likely to have more land and be able to produce their own hay for the winter months. These farms even sometimes seemed more beautiful. Zeb argued that it is only "a select few, the most holiest, and generally the most richest amongst us are really taking care of land in a truly sustainable way and almost none of us have closed loop systems."

An experience at one farm made this comment particularly prominent to me. During my visit to Horse Sense Farm I watched a feral dog that had recently whelped a litter of puppies in a horse trailer on the farm kill a chicken. As I watched the dog dart around the farm with a limp chicken hanging from her jaws I was nervous about what would happen next; growing up in an agricultural setting, I had seen dogs shot for far less than a daily chicken theft. (In fact, it seemed growing up that everyone I knew was constantly threatening to shoot a neighbor's dog, and these were not empty threats). So I felt that I was about to witness one of those private family moments that make you want to disappear. But to my surprise Penny said the dog had been killing a chicken daily for over a week, and Penny and Jeff seemed only slightly upset about the loss of their chickens and then offered me one of the puppies. Penny said she planned on trapping the dog and maybe trying to tame her after her puppies were old enough to be given away. I was truly shocked by the peaceful response. This couple was so empathetic to the dog's

situation, saying that she was just trying to feed her puppies, that someone had probably dropped her pregnant on the side of the road. I found myself thinking about their response for some time, truly in awe of their kindness to a dog that was running around with a dead chicken in its mouth. I certainly do not want to take away from their real act of charity; however, it is also clear that Penny and Jeff were one of the most well-to-do farm couples I interviewed. In some way their response speaks to the ways that they could (apparently) afford to lose a few chickens, something that not everyone I interviewed would have been able to absorb.

Not all the farmers I interviewed had chickens, but it was interesting to me that Claire, whose husband also has a very well paying job, had their chickens running around the farm while Yvette, one of the farmers I interviewed who seemed to have the fewest resources, noted that she kept her chickens in a pen behind an electric fence to protect them from predators. I am not sure any of the farmers I interviewed would have killed the dog; however, it is clear that some of them, like Yvette, simply could not afford to take the same level of risk. This is a risk that would seemingly make the farm fit better with the tenets of sustainable farming because it means letting the chickens forage over large areas thus reducing the amount of scratch they must be fed and distributing their manure over larger areas.

Farm Labor and Subsidies

During my interviews it became clear that it was not just the farmers who benefitted from their off farm resources. Essentially the farmers were subsidizing the

food at the market with their off farm income, their unpaid or very poorly paid labor, or both. In truth all these farmers have made tangible sacrifices to produce food. They may have an abiding love for farming and have things they were giving up to farm, yet their love of farm does not diminish the sacrifices they were making.

The farmers who had the fewest opportunities or desires for off farm income did the most farm labor. For example, Wendy at Mountain Glen Dairy confided that she worked at the farm about 120 hours a week working from 3am to 9-11pm, something I didn't doubt when she showed me the office she had built in her new dairy: it included a bed. On top of that Wendy was a single mom of two young children. Her schedule was simply grueling. Similarly, Opal and Jack and their son live extremely simply. They do not have a car and live in a home that appeared to be less than four hundred square feet. Their farm is mostly self-sustaining and produces the food the family eats; they are also able to keep the food affordable by, as Opal put it, "giving our own labor freely." If Wendy hired two fulltime people to assist her—so that all three (including Wendy) worked 40 hour weeks—her cheese and milk would be much more expensive. If Opal and Jack stopped giving their labor away, fewer people could eat their food. Though it is slightly different, if Jeff and Penny's as well as Claire and Peter's farms were not partially supported by the men's well paying jobs, they likely would not have engaged in farming. Throughout my interviews and farm visits it was clear that to survive as a sustainable farmer one either had to have an off farm income, some form of wealth, or be willing to live extremely, extremely simply.

When I was at the market it occurred to me that the farmers were hard working because simply unloading at the market is onerous, but when one sees the piles of food that is scrubbed, sorted, and displayed there is no doubt that simply making it to the market is labor intensive. What did not occur to me is that though this food is often more expensive than food that is produced on an industrial scale, the true cost of this sustainable food is really not being presented at the market. If the farmers were paying themselves a fair market wage, even a minimum wage to farm, or if they had to incur the full cost of their farms, including the land values, the food prices would be considerably more expensive. This of course is not to say that the price of industrial agriculture is not also subsidized by exploitive labor practices and government subsidizes to particular industries, but I was left wondering, how sustainable is sustainable agriculture if it requires farmers to either be well educated and willing to subsidize the farm (at least in the beginning) with their off farm labor, and it requires them to give away their labor very cheaply?

As I noted in my Literature Review, there is evidence that large-scale organic producers and some smaller sustainable producers are relying on cheap labor, often that of undocumented Hispanic laborers on their farms. I saw relatively little evidence of widespread use of this kind of labor during my farm visits. Of course, this is not to say that this type of labor is not being used, but it is to say that I didn't observe many instances of it. Jeff told me that he occasionally would use a service to hire a group of Hispanic day laborers to come to the farm and weed when he and Penny felt particularly desperate, and he made a point of telling me that he always paid more than the minimum

wage. And as I was driving away from the Winding Road Farm, I observed a Hispanic man driving up a hill on a tractor. Yet during my interview with Claire she did not mention this man as a worker on the farm, so I do not know if he worked there. Thus, other than Jeff's comment about hiring Hispanic day labors and the mystery man on the tractor, everyone I observed working on the farms was white.

This group of farmers did seem to avoid the often-exploitive practices of hiring Hispanic laborers; however, I was struck by the fact that many of the farmers routinely hired laborers that were not working for a typical wage. These workers were typically interns, volunteers, and "WWOOFers." At Winding Road Meat and Dairy Claire introduced me to her "WWOOFer," which stood for "Willing Workers on Organic Farms," or, "Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms." WWOOFers are usually young people from around the world who live on the farm and have the opportunity to learn more about farming. The amount they earn is often quite limited. As Claire introduced me to the WWOOFer on her farm that was busy with one of the milk cows, she explained that her eldest child was currently in New Zealand working as a WWOOFer himself. At the food bank farm Phil explained that interns and volunteer laborers were essential in running the farm. During the summer they worked a crew of 14 to 15 year old students that typically earned $20.00 a day. Phil noted the low wage was one of the "one of the ways we kept the program going" during a period with fewer grants coming in.

Opal also spoke of the role that interning played in sustainable farming. She noted that one of the best ways of learning to farm was interning on two or three farms.

She said, "even if you feel like, 'I can't believe I'm working this hard and not making anything,' you'll be learning more than you know you'll be learning and try to go to places that are vastly different from each, knowing what you don't want to do is as important as knowing what you do want to do because it will really slim down the options." In fact, some of the farmers themselves noted the important role that interning played in their farming experience; both Phil and Yvette spoke of the time they spent interning as important to their transition in running their own farms. This apprenticeship model does make sense as it gives one hands on learning experience, yet the fact remains that it is also a means of cheap labor for the farms that use it. It is not surprising that the larger farms tend to employ interns. The smaller farms may not have room to house interns and may not have enough labor for them, thus this gives the larger sustainable farms the advantage of using this cheap source of labor.

Interestingly, the young farmers were much more likely to have interned. Perhaps the interning process is becoming a more important step in running one's own farm. In part this is likely because there are simply many more farms to intern on than there were twenty years ago.

Older farmers like Zeb, Sam, and Opal, however, were more likely to have been involved in farm type collectives where they learned to farm with others who were also novices. Jeff, and to some extent Peter, came to farming later in life with the financial resources to buy land and take workshops about farming. The interning process seems to have become more important over time. This seems to be another example of the ways

that sustainable food is subsidized by those who believe deeply in the importance of growing food, giving away their labor to make it available.

The sheer amount of labor that went into running the farms, even during the winter, which is considered the "quiet" season, was daunting. When I showed up, no matter when I came, farmers were involved in some kind of farm labor. At Horse Sense Jeff was hauling flakes of alfalfa hay to feed the horse and Penny was sorting through vegetables in a shed. At Winding Road Claire was paying bills and Peter was working on the marketing. Wendy ran from the milking barn to greet me and then we headed back to the barn. As I interviewed Opal she sorted through piles of carrots that had been eaten by nutria that I assumed would become animal fodder as her husband Jack worked in a backfield. Zeb asked that we do the interview at 8:30 at night after he was done working, while at To Your Health Janine showed me around waiting for Sam to come in from chores that were taking longer than he had thought they would. I was almost always freezing when I did the interviews in the soggy Oregon winter. Yet, the farmers were rarely deterred. Phil said he was happy for a little break as we sat outside at a picnic table next to a pile of cabbage for the interview.

Clearly, the labor on farms is significant; it happens outdoors in the elements, and it is hard on the body (something that was pointed out in detail by the doctor/farmer I interviewed). As I argue in Chapter V, farmers use specific marketing strategies to command the highest price for their food (vs. trying to sell a high volume of food cheaply). Yet despite the ways the food has been priced, it often does not accurately reflect the amount of labor that goes into its production. Jeff quoted a friend of his as

saying, "the only thing that isn't sustainable about sustainable farming is the farmer," and then he added, "it's wearing on your body, that's maybe why you see so many young people apprenticing and doing farming, that's one of the reasons you don't see them go on to be farmers because it's too hard on your body." From my research it seems this comment is quite accurate. Farmers, especially the ones running smaller farms with little hired help, must give freely of their labor and with that their bodies and their health.

There is a sense both at the market and talking with the farmers that this kind of farming is noble work, that farming, at least sustainable farming, is a valuable and important profession that is worthy of respect. In a subtle way the farmers were the stars of the market; people lined up to talk to them and ask them questions. Perhaps the gratitude and respect that comes from the consumers of the food one has produced becomes a sort of intangible payment. Opal, who was by far the most unsure she wanted to remain a farmer told me that some day she says to herself,

> 'Oh, this is so pointless. I can't believe I've done this for so long.' And its not like dominant paradigm, it's still what the dominant paradigm is, it's pointless, then one of those people will walk up and say, 'Oh, Opal, I've got tell you about how you've totally changed our life.' And then they'll tell me about all the different things in their family life, which are completely different based on the connection on what we do and who we are, so then I'm like, 'Okay, it's not pointless!'

Of course, changing someone's life is powerful, but it does not generate much income, at least in this case.

Gender, Race, and the Farms

My last project examined women and gender in conventional agriculture (Pilgeram 2007). Finding women farm operators to interview was a challenge during that project because there simply are not that many women running conventional farms. So I was surprised how many women were intimately involved in sustainable farming. At every farm where I interviewed, women played vital roles and held decision-making power about how the farm would operate. This is not to say that women involved in conventional agriculture are not also playing vital roles, but rather these roles often go unacknowledged by both the men and often the women as well. This did not seem to be the case on the sustainable farms. Instead, both the men and women described the kinds of jobs that women did on the farm in managerial and ownership terms. Originally, I had hoped to interview all female farm operators, but as it became clear that finding anyone to interview would be difficult I changed my strategy and began interviewing men as well as women. This actually revealed something quite important. It revealed how important and acknowledged the labor that women do on farms is to the male farmers I interviewed. Said another way, the men who I interviewed were quick to point out the way the labor was stratified on the farm and how important their partnership with women was to the success of the farm. Furthermore, it was clear in my interviews with both men and

women that these farms are partnerships where labor and decision-making power are shared.

For example, in my interview with Zeb he explained how the labor was split on the farm by saying that his wife, "is more responsible for the nursery production, sort of things, overseeing people, making soil, putting it in the trays, seeding, she does a lot of the seeding herself, she's pretty expert at it, … she oversees that part, various people will be assisting her," while he took care of most of the crops for the farmers' market food production. And in my interview with Jeff he noted, "my wife basically runs the farm, she decides what we're going to plant and when, and I do more of the [farmers'] marketing field work, we both do it together, but she's more into selecting the variety and the day to day operation, I have a part-time job, so I don't work here full-time, since I'm not here to manage all the time, that kind of falls to her, management is difficult, so anyway, so we have kind of a give and take relationship."

In all my interviews, with the exception of Mountain Glen Dairy, which was run by a single woman, the partnership between the couples I interviewed was emphasized. It did not matter if I was interviewing a man or a woman; they all emphasized the ways that labor and decision making was shared. Interestingly, even at the Food Bank farm that was run by a man, he frequently made mention of Sadie, a woman who helped manage the student workers during the summer and who worked on securing grants and donations that kept the farm afloat. Despite it not being a familial relationship, Phil described the work Sadie did as fundamentally important to maintaining the farm. I cannot emphasize enough what a radical departure this is from the gender inequity in

conventional agriculture where women's labor is often constructed as nonessential compared to men's. I think this suggests a much different level of equity on these sustainable farms. Women's labor has always been essential to maintaining and running farms, but this acknowledgement of their labor suggest a level of equity that is much less common in conventional farming.

Though women's labor did seem valued it is also important to note that, with the exception of two farms, women's labor was bound to the farms through a married relationship. The exceptions, Mountain Glen and the Food Bank Farm, are also interesting cases. At the Food Bank Farm, Phil was working for a nonprofit for a salary and didn't own the land he farmed. And at Mountain Glen, Wendy was farming land that belonged to her husband's family after he left under what seemed to be mysterious circumstances.

Thus these exceptions do not detract from the way that women's access to the land is tied to her partnership to a man in a way that man's access to land is not tied to his partnership with a woman. For example, in the cases of Winding Road and Horse Sense Farm it was the husbands' off farm income that gave women access to land to farm. In the cases of Bountiful Farms and To Your Health Farms, it was the men who had the farm and then married women who became heavily involved in the farm. In all cases women's access to the land was related to her partnership with man. Even at Dogwood and Sunrise Farms, which did seem to be more equal partnerships in terms of off farm income and distribution of labor, the relationship between the couple was essential. It is interesting that at Mountain Glen where her access to the land seemed mostly a given as a

single woman Wendy was working from 3am to 11pm. All the farmers subsidized the farms with their own low paid labor, but this was extreme. Wendy's success required that she that make up for the missing labor of a partner, which she did by sleeping very little. It is difficult to compare her situation to Phil's given the different economic constraints they are under, but Phil did have the assistance of Sadie and also noted that the farm had hired someone to help him part time.

Additionally, all of the farmers I interviewed were white, with the exception of Penny from Horse Sense Farms who described her race by saying, "my mom's from Okinawa." The prominence of whiteness among the farmers did not surprise me; the demographic makeup of the market prepared me for this probability. But it is important to note that when I say that there are opportunities for women in sustainable agriculture, what I mean is that there are opportunities for white women. Whiteness is correlated with both higher education levels and earning levels as compared to most other racial and ethnic groups in the US (U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics 2009). Whiteness is also tied to contemporary farm ownership in the US. In fact, according to the 2007 UDSA Farm Census, 97 percent of principle farmer operators are white. Thus, though Oregon is a state with a largely white population (presently about 80% of the population is white, not of Hispanic origin), the present association with farm ownership and whiteness certainly extends beyond the bounds of the Oregon population demographics. [4]

This issue of land ownership can also help to explain the racialized inequality in sustainable agriculture. As researchers have noted, land ownership among people of

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[4] Of course, while whiteness is associated with farm ownership, the physical laborers on many farms, particularly in Oregon, are Hispanic men, women, and children.

color (and African Americans in particular) is grossly unequal; African-Americans own less than one percent of the land in the US while Hispanics own less than two percent, in part due to partitioning sales, non-participation in farm programs, and systemic discrimination by the USDA, as was noted in a 1997 class action lawsuit against the agency (Gilbert, Sharp, and Felin 2002). Yet despite the necessity of labor from people of color to the success of both conventional and sustainable agriculture, according to Allen "women and ethnic minorities have not had equal access to land, capital, or decision making in the food and agriculture system" (Allen 1993:148). As I noted in the literature review, access to land does more than just allow people of color opportunities to farm. Research suggests that when people of color have access to land they are more likely to sell their food in underserved communities of color and that people of color are more likely to shop at farmer's markets where they feel they have a connection to the farmers.

So it is important to understand the ways that opportunities in sustainable agriculture are structured and often reproduce similar racial and gender hierarchies that are part of the larger culture: women's participation in sustainable agriculture often relies on her relationship to a male partner (usually her husband) and success is also clearly related to whiteness.

As this suggests, success as farmers often relies on the ideals of the heterosexual white couple, yet, the relationship between whiteness, heterosexual marriage and success at the market is not often acknowledged. Rather it is so normalized that it is difficult to even "see" these constructions of sustainability despite evidence. Importantly, as I argue

in the next chapter, the hegemony of the white, straight couple in sustainable agriculture ultimately works to link the wholesomeness of sustainable food to the perceived wholesomeness of this family form.

The Feminization of Sustainable Farm Labor

It is primarily married heterosexual couples that run the farms; however, the labor on the farms where I visited tends to be feminized. My findings here do not apply to all the farms, but they are interesting and I think would perhaps be a good topic for further research. There were a number of interesting examples of the feminization of labor on these sustainable farms. The most visible example was at Mountain Glen Dairy, where Wendy informed me that everyone working on the farm with her they day I visited was female. There were two women milking goats and another making the cheese. This was the first farm I visited, and I was struck by the contrast between it and the conventional farms I had visited. Wendy noted that of the 10 people she managed only 2 were male; one of these was a young teenage neighbor who liked helping out around the farm. I theorized that the labor distribution on this farm was related to it being run by a single woman. And though I found it interesting, I did not expect to find this gender distribution again (and to a large extent I did not).

However, part of the reason was that Mountain Glen had more outside workers than any other farm I visited. In fact, many of the farms like Dogwood and Sunrise Farms rarely hired outside help, and many of the other farms also used little outside labor. Just the same, at Horse Sense Farms and To Your Health farm the farmers

reported that their most senior workers were women. Both Penny at Horse Sense and Wendy at Mountain Glen noted that more women asked to work on their farms than men. When I asked them why they hired women, most said simply that women applied for the jobs more than men and that they stayed around longer than men. My observations supported what the farmers reported. At Horse Sense I was introduced to the only other person working on the farm that day, a young woman. At To Your Health both Sam and Janine spoke glowingly of a woman who had worked on their farm for over 15 years and was considered a manager of sorts. At Winding Road I was introduced to their female WOOFer who appeared to be the only person working on the farm who was not a family member. Furthermore, as I noted, I observed a number of women working on farms. I did not observe any hired men working during my visits. And in general, the farmers reported hiring little additional outside people who were working while I visited. This could be a function of when I visited or the size of the farms I visited, but I think it is an interesting question to examine further.

Other researchers have noted that sustainable agricultural practices in California tend to replicate the same race and gendered patterns of conventional agriculture—mostly employing Hispanic males—but based on the limited findings from my research I think it would be important to examine the question of gender and sustainable farm employment, paying particular attention to how the size of the sustainable farm affects who works on them.

Conclusion

The farmers I interviewed bring different levels of experience and different values to their farming. Yet there are some clear patterns from my interviews and farm visits. In general, the farmers tend to be well educated as well as having high levels of cultural and/or economic capital. These forms of capital are often essential for the success of their farms because, first and foremost, they give the farmers access to farmland. Yet this capital, both actual and cultural, also means that farmers end up subsidizing the food they sell either through the their off-farm income or through their highly subsided labor. Furthermore, in this research I find that though there are opportunities for women, these opportunities seem frequently linked to white, heterosexually married women, most likely because white men they are married to have more access to the land and capital necessary to farm. I should be clear that I do not think that the farmers are consciously constructing these kinds of limited opportunities; rather I see them as related to larger social structures that mediate sustainable agriculture in ways that often privilege and reflect dominant paradigms about race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Moreover, from a simple economic standpoint, it stands to reason based on average earning and wealth differences between a white heterosexual couple and a black lesbian couple that access to the land would be difficult for the latter couple. For example, would this imaginary couple be able to secure a bank loan?

Thus I want to be clear that I do not see the farmers or the consumers as causing this form of inequality in sustainable agriculture. Rather, these are social issues that reflect the larger inequality in our society—white, middle-class people have more access

to "things" like education, land, and social capital. This is a sphere that despite good intentions privileges particular kinds of people.

My findings suggest that the farmers are clearly committed to creating environmentally sustainable systems and are concerned with who they are able to feed through the work they do. However, at small farms where I interviewed, I found they often use exploitive labor practices, but they are practices that are often exploitive of their own labor. In other words, the farmers do not often seem adequately compensated for the work they are doing, and it is often a commitment to the tenets of "sustainability," their love of farming, or both that keeps them at their job. Though farmers did talk about issues of access to sustainable food, in general the farmers were more invested in the environmental issues tied to sustainability rather than the social issues. Throughout my research, I was struck by the ways the economic system limits the ability of the farmers to truly run sustainable farms. Given the price of land and the availability of highly subsidized conventional food, the farmers must be extremely committed to continue the work they do. It seems that despite beliefs in the tenets of social sustainability, the structural barriers to fully abiding by these tenets in a society that is classed, radicalized, and gendered can be difficult at best.

CHAPTER V

THE NORTHWEST FARMERS' MARKET

The Northwest Farmers' Market occupies less than a single city block in the downtown area of a town with a population of 150,000 people. The seasonal farmers' market begins in April on Saturdays, then as the summer ripens more fruits and vegetables it expands to small Tuesday and Thursday markets that last into the fall harvest. As the growing season slows, only the Saturday market remains through mid-November. It then becomes part of a "Holiday Market" and temporarily moves indoors at the local fairgrounds.

Despite the efforts of many local activists and politicians, the downtown where the market takes place is at best quiet, filled with coffee shops, clothing and bookstores, and a smattering of empty storefronts. At its worst it is labeled as a dangerous area full of loitering skateboarders and other "nogoodnik" young people and panhandlers. The markets change the area, however briefly, as they draw people to the downtown area and gives one the sense that this is a vibrant, active area. Throughout my observations, I was struck by the way the market made an otherwise empty area safe, bustling, and interesting.

The farmers' market and the accompanying Saturday craft market is a quintessential part of this Northwest town, and the market serves as a sort of hallmark for the town. It is a town that went green before "going green" was cool; in fact, National Geographic named it the #1 Green City in America. It is a town where the rugged individualism of the American West combined with the free love and tie-dye of the 1960s and 70s to create a community full of people interested in "sustainable" living, however amorphous the concept, people who are interested in building a livable community and seem to take a certain pride in getting their hands dirty, or least knowing someone who does. Thus this space is a particularly important site to study the construction of sustainability because this is a town that is continually labeled "sustainable" and "green," and the farmers' market is a central place to see people engaging in what they label as sustainable and environmentally conscious behavior.

Furthermore, this market is a space that was consciously built on egalitarian principles. The mission statement of the market, for example, is to "further the health of the entire community by enhancing the viability of producing and marketing Oregon grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, plants & animal products through a democratic association which advances the shared values of the Market community." Moreover, based on my interviews with consumers and farmers, these seem to be shared and esteemed values.

However, based on my observations, the market seems to be a space where some people are able to fit more easily than others. If creating an alternative food system is as important as many have led us to believe (and on a personal level I think it is absolutely

essential), then we must begin to understand how the spaces of this food system are constructed in ways that become antithetical to notions of inclusion and ultimately real change. If everyone's health and the health of our planet is at stake, then we need to create systems were everyone has a place at the table, or even knows where the table is.

In this chapter I argue that the market is constructed as a space that occurs "naturally," but that this construction ends up privileging people who meet a hegemonic norm and ends up reinforcing systems of inequality that are part of the larger culture. In particular, I discuss the ways that the aesthetics of the market creates a space for white, middle-class consumers and uses imagery of the white, heterosexual family to showcase sustainability. I am not arguing that anyone is consciously building the market to be exclusionary. On the contrary, it seems antithetical to the values of the people who are building this space; however, I would argue that there are tangible, if unnoticed, benefits to both the consumers and the farmers from making the space relatively homogeneous. These benefits have made the space exclusionary not through design, but through practice.

A Classed Space

If you get to the market earlier enough—before 6:30 AM—you can watch it transform from a wide slab of concrete that sits U-shaped around a raised parking lot that occupies the center of the space to a vibrant farmers' market. Even with the few small shade trees, benches, and bus stop, before the shoppers and farmers arrive the space looks austere. There is too much concrete and too few people. The wide area that sits on the

perimeter of the parking lot faces a park block with a fountain and grassy spots. These two blocks looks like someone read Jane Jacobs' book on city design—but only the part about giving people places to sit and water fountains—and forgot to read the part about drawing people to the area to actually use these places. Most of the time the area is unused and feels too exposed, too open to be comfortable.

Yet as the sun slowly begins to warm the concrete on Saturday mornings, trucks arrive. Most of them are small white delivery trucks with bumper stickers about the merits of local food. They back up to the sidewalk and boxes full of whatever is in season are hauled out. Sellers set up canopies between orange cones that mark that farm's space. Quickly the scaffolding of the market comes together with a few empty spaces remaining for the late arrivals.

What comes next is nothing short of artistry. Coordinating tablecloths are produced and piles of cardboard boxes and plastic tubs give way to neatly stacked piles of carrots with the greens still attached and baskets full of baby lettuce mixes. Most of the sellers have the set up down to a science. They know where to put an overturned box on the table so that when the tablecloths are put on it creates a cascading effect on the table. Most of the stands are designed with every detail attended to—every holey leaf removed from the kale, every bunch of radishes similarly sized. It gives one the impression that every piece of food the farmers produce is perfect, that they never get the carrot that hits a rock and forks or lettuce that the slugs have munched on. By the time the market starts, the stands are overflowing with whatever foods are in season: tomatoes, lettuces, potatoes, Swiss chard and zucchini.

Even the signs displaying the prices of the food coordinate with the aesthetic of the stands; many are laminated beige cardstock with the farm's name and logo centered on the top and price handwritten below, while others use chalkboards with colored chalk to announce their pricing. Regardless, the overall aesthetic implies a sort of effortless and natural beauty: purple, yellow and white potatoes tumbling out of an elevated wicker basket onto a table loaded with stacks of pearly white onions with their long green stalks still attached surrounded by a sea of butter leaf and red sails lettuce.

The food at the market is literally "naturalized." It represents what food that is "local" or "organic" or "sustainable" (or in other words what food that is "good for you") looks like (or at least what we imagine it should look like). And through this sort of universal perfection of the food, it suggests that this food always looks like this. This is not to say that consumers are so naïve as to think that the farmers dug the potatoes from the ground and threw them onto the table without at least a rinse from a hose, but some consumers see the food at the market as more "authentic" than food from a conventional grocery store in part because of the ways it is presented. The assumption is that this is what "real" food looks like. The food here is being displayed not only for the purpose of making it more attractive to consumers but to remove it from aesthetics tied to industrial agriculture. For example, when the food arrives at the market, it is usually in either large plastic containers or waxed produce boxes; however all but one vendor out of almost 50 takes it out of the those containers and displays their food in baskets or on tables. Displaying the food this way hides the visible reminders that sustainable agriculture is a system that often relies on at least a few some of the same trappings of mass production

and mass consumption. With delivery trucks parked out of sight and plastic tubs of potatoes hidden under the table, it becomes easier to believe that sustainable agriculture is a system that is "natural" rather than seeing it as something constructed based on a particular belief system about the natural world. This space is constructed to evoke a specific ideology about the food, a specific idea about what sustainable food is.

Another example of this is the ways many of the root vegetables like carrots and beets are displayed. Row after colorful row of carrots are displayed with their feathery greens still attached. Yet, most gardeners know to remove the greens from root vegetables after they are picked because the tops continue to pull moisture and nutrients from the vegetable. Furthermore, while edible, almost no one (except for bunnies) actually eats the tops of carrots, something that is evident by the fact that most vendors remove the carrot tops once they are purchased, twisting them off and throwing them into a container that is taken back to the farm and composted. The carrots are displayed like this because it sets them apart from the carrots available at a conventional grocery store and because it is something that is associated with a farmers' market. The carrot top is a means of signifying distinction. It is a means of turning a rather ordinary food, one that is readily available, into a "sustainable" food.

The market is beautiful and somehow the top on a carrot does seem to make it look more appealing. Yet, it is difficult to operationalize what exactly makes a vegetable or a space beautiful. For example, a consumer I interviewed at the market mentioned that she liked to see dirt on her food because it implied that food really came from the earth. Most people would probably prefer not to find dirt on their food, yet, in this space the dirt

serves as evidence of the authenticity of the food for this consumer. (Of course, the irony is that the farmers spend considerable time and energy cleaning the food before it comes to market. Some products require more cleaning than others—an onion is more labor intensive to prepare than a zucchini—but both require certain processes to be ready for the market).

Part of why I enjoy arriving at the market before it opens is because I like watching it transform from a rather grey lot to a vibrant cornucopia; it reminds me that this space is indeed constructed to look a specific way, to make people feel a specific way. It stands to reason that it would be easier to leave all the food in plastic tubs, so why do the farmers go to the work of beautifying their stands? I would argue that beauty is largely constructed; yet in this space the vendors and the consumers all seem to have certain agreed upon rules about what makes this space and the food beautiful. Sellers who want to succeed have no choice but to make their stands as beautiful as the one next to them because ultimately they are competing for customers. Some consumers are loyal to a particular farm, but the consumers I interviewed all said they to like to browse and did not have a particular allegiance to any one farm.[5] Thus, these sellers have to work to construct their food in a particular way that is enticing to the consumer. These farms are constructed as naturally beautiful, when in reality they are consciously constructed to look a particular way, to evoke a particular feeling.

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[5] CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) members might be an exception. From my observations they tended to be loyal to their CSA farm; they would pick up their box, see what they still needed more of, and then go buy it from that stand. Perhaps this is out of a sense of loyalty to a farm they obviously like enough to be come CSA members of or because many farms offer discounts to their CSA members.

This makes sense if we think of the market as a classed space. The farmers are consciously presenting an image of the farms and the food, and the beautification of their individual booths is a way to attract consumers as well as demonstrating to the consumers that this food is different than food you can get at a conventional grocery store; it says this food that is worth the higher price. Yet the higher prices in effect help to "select" a particular kind of consumer. The aura of the space marks it as sphere for the middle and upper class. Making the market beautiful allows for it to be maintained as a middle and upper class space, which allows the food to be sold at a higher price point.

I argue that the beautification of the market classes it in two specific ways. The first is relatively simple—making the stands and food appear "sustainable" through the use of baskets and displays is a way of commanding the higher prices of the food. It is a means of confirming that this food is indeed something distinct from food grown by industrial producers that is available at a conventional grocery store. This higher price point ends up selecting consumers who believe buying sustainable food is better usually either for health, environment, or community building reasons and, importantly, people who can afford to spend more on their food.

The other way that the beautification of the market ends up creating a classed environment is tied to Bourdeiu's discussion of distinction. The market reflects a particular vision of beauty and value. I am not arguing that the working class does not appreciate or seek out beauty, rather I am arguing that what is perceived as beautiful is often tied to social class. Thus, in part the market is constructed based on a classed vision of beauty. As I argued in the previous chapter, most of the sustainable farmers I

interviewed are not only highly educated, many of them also have well paying jobs off the farms that help to subsidize their farming. Thus, the way the stands are presented reflects what these vendors see as beautiful—the stands are a reflection of the farmers' vision of sustainability and a reflection of what the farmers think the consumers' vision is. It makes sense that farmers would beautify their stands as it allows them to compete with the other farmers; furthermore, these are places where the people involved tend to feel a great deal of pride and ownership. This beautification, however, ends up selecting a particular class of consumer.

Again, this is not to say that working class people do not want healthy, beautiful food—the research clearly contradicts this. I think it is more complicated than that. Instead it is tied to the ways spaces are classed and the subtle cues that mark spaces. At the market these cues include not just the price of the foods, but elements such as the varieties of food that are available. The farmer I interviewed who was employed by a local charity to grow food for needy people made this point clearly. He noted that food he grew for the charity was different than what he would be growing if he were growing for the farmers' market. Specifically, he noted that he was growing lots more onions and potatoes than a market farmer and that he does not grow vegetables like Swiss chard because his clients will not eat it. Thus, the food that is available at the market, everything from the chevre to the kohlrabi, signifies class.

Furthermore, he noted that he is able to harvest at his farm and uses food at his farm that would either be "plowed under" or donated to the food bank by the market farmers. He believed that only prime food is sold at the market; food that is perfectly

edible but not aesthetically perfect does not show up at the market because the competition between the vendors makes it so farmers feel that seconds undermine a farm's image. Yet, surely there are consumers (I think of myself) who would love the opportunity to purchase local food at a lower cost even if it meant getting a split tomato or a bruised melon. The reason that farmers do not bring this food to market is likely complicated, but there may be a fear that bringing seconds to market would flood the market and lower the prices rather than seeing these seconds as bringing in a bigger cross section of shoppers.

But Don't They Accept Food Stamps?

Some might argue that offering consumers a variety of foods is not necessarily a classed act and that there are a number of elements at the market that suggest that it is a class inclusive space. One of the most visible of these are the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC), Food Stamp, and Senior Voucher signs around the market which show that these food security programs are accepted at the market. The farmer's market is set up to accept WIC and Senior Vouchers and Food Stamps. Despite this, I observed no one using food stamps and only one woman using her WIC vouchers during all my observations; she bought a few ears of corn and turned to her mother and whispered that she was going to save the rest of her money to let her kids pick out pumpkins at Halloween. Based on my interviews and observations, the senior voucher program is much better utilized at the market.

As a consumer who has used WIC and Food Stamps at the market, it seems understandable to me why I did not observe a great deal of participation with these programs in this space. First, the state has designed both programs in a way that requires the user to "out" herself when using them and also requires the recipient to learn how to use the benefits in the space of the market. The WIC program in particular is quite obtrusive. First, to participate in the Farmer's Market WIC program it requires that the recipient express interest in the program by calling to sign up for the vouchers during the designated sign-up period (usually after the first week of June). Then she must attend a program at a specific time on how to buy and use produce with the vouchers. The year I participated in the program (2007) it was held at the market, which is not uncommon.[6] The WIC program sets up a booth for recipients to pick up their vouchers and learn about buying fresh, local food. This program requires recipients to be quite open with the fact that they are receiving government assistance by standing in front of the booth while the details of the vouchers are explained. Thus, after outing yourself at the market you receive twenty dollars worth of vouchers that must be used between June and October. Ultimately, despite being fairly poor, it struck me that this was a relatively time consuming process with relatively little pay off. Furthermore, as is explained at the WIC informational meeting, the vouchers come with a variety of restrictions on the kinds of food that can be purchased: for example, no jam or honey. They also come in two-dollar

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[6] While the WIC program varies from year to year how clients pick up vouchers, according to one WIC staff member I talked to this has to do with the number of staff available to run the program at the market rather than a regard for the privacy of their clients.

increments with no change given. I saw perhaps only one woman using them during my observations because they are not particularly easy to use.

The Food Stamps program is somewhat less obtrusive, but still awkward to use at the market. Using food stamps to buy something at the market is a many step process. First, the consumer takes the food to the farm stand to be rung up, and then asks the cashier to fill out a special card with the amount to be charged to the food stamp card. The consumer then leaves the items selected behind the counter. Next, the consumer goes to the Farmer's Market Consignment booth to stand in line with the special card that the farmer filled out with the total price written on it. This card is given to the cashier at the consignment booth who charges the food stamp card. The cashier runs the food stamp card and stamps the special card as paid. The consumer then returns to the farm booth with the card stamped as paid, stands in line, and finally hands over the now stamped special card to receive the selected food. This system is not terribly different from the system for people who pay with credit cards, since the consignment booth also runs the credit cards; however, many people who would use a credit card end up running to the bank across the street to get cash, something that people on food stamps cannot do.

I felt quite awkward using both programs at the market. Whereas the WIC process is awkward because it requires you take a class to figure out how to use the vouchers, the Food Stamp process is equally awkward because it requires that you figure out this system without any direction. It literally took months at the market before I felt comfortable enough to use my food stamps card there. In part it was because I simply was not sure which sellers took food stamps. It can be uncomfortable not knowing if the

stand you are buying from accepts food stamps or will know how to use them. When the market began in the spring, very few vendors advertised that they took food stamps and WIC. Furthermore, some signs said that they took WIC vouchers but said nothing about food stamps. Given that food stamps are actually run through the Farmer's Market booth that oversees the entire market, it turns out all the booths can accept food stamps as well as WIC vouchers, yet their lateness in advertising this fact kept me from buying food there till July. I did not know who took the cards, and there is a stigma when using food stamps. If I was using a credit card I would have felt more comfortable asking about procedures, but the food stamps card made me want the transactions to be as quick and hidden as possible.

Just the same, when I began using food stamps at the market the sellers were quite helpful in making the process as smooth as possible. They were uniformly friendly and helpful. Furthermore a number of the farmers seemed to feel quite awkward about holding my vegetables for ransom behind the stand while I went to get my coupon stamped. One seller even insisted that I take the cantaloupe I bought with me and bring my stamped coupon back at my leisure. Another made a point of showing me where she was putting my peaches and that I would get the same ones I picked out when I returned. Yet, while many of the sellers know how the food stamp system works and can give directions to people who are using their benefits at the market for the first time, there are other sellers who either do not realize that the market accepts food stamps or have no idea how the system works. In that case I had to teach to the seller how to accept food stamps

at the market and in one case even go get the cards that farmer stamps in order to process my transaction.

Clearly, both the WIC and food stamp systems are designed by the government and not by the market organizers. And there are real issues in making the system more user friendly. For instance, processing food stamps requires electricity and some kind of phone or wireless connection. So, ultimately, many of the criticisms about their use at the market are actually criticisms of the system itself. Yet, while the market is certainly not responsible for setting up a WIC office in the center of the market, it stands to reason that there are some things they could do to make the process easier and more user friendly. Food stamps in particular are time consuming to use and require the user to learn a system through trial and error. If the majority of the consumers at the market used food stamps I think the market organizers and the sellers would come up with more effective ways to process them, yet based on the way the system operates at the market, the assumption seems to be that very few people will be using them so it is not necessary to make the system more user friendly.[7] Even as someone with a great deal of social capital, who feels that both food stamps and farmers markets are important and worthwhile, I still felt uncomfortable using food stamps in this space in particular.

In fact, one of the primary reasons I would only browse at the market but not buy anything there before I began this project was that I did not know how to use my food stamps there. It seems simple to imagine ways to make these systems a little easier to use

[7] For example, I tend to shop either at a grocery store where lots of people use food stamps and a number of the cashiers have also talked to me about having used them, or I shop at grocery stores with self check-out so that no one sees me using them.

in these places—for instance the consignment booth could sell chips to food stamp and credit card users that they could then spend around the market. Furthermore, they could require every vendor to post signs about accepting food stamps, WIC and Senior Vouchers, and they could post directions on their website or have pamphlets at the main booth of the market explaining how to use them.

Interestingly, I saw Senior Vouchers used more frequently, and two of the people I interviewed talked about using the vouchers. The Senior Vouchers are similar to WIC vouchers in that they are coupons good for two dollars worth of vegetables. While the seniors using them had some complaints—mostly that you cannot get change for your voucher—they all seemed to have developed strategies for using them to get the most return. For instance, always trying to spend a little over two dollars at a stand and paying the difference. Yet, these vouchers were qualitatively different than the WIC vouchers because the seniors reported that they are sent directly to their homes. Furthermore, the vouchers are tied to social security benefits and these are benefits that nearly all seniors receive and are not stigmatized in the ways that food stamps and WIC benefits are. I did not specifically ask questions of the consumers about their vouchers, but a number of the senior consumers mentioned them during their interviews and were quite unanimous in their appreciation of them.

This suggests that while the implementation of a program is important—the seniors for example are not required to learn how to use their vouchers at the market—the stigmatization of certain programs also affects the way they are used. Senior vouchers are attached to social security benefits and seniors may feel "entitled" to their money

(because it is based on income and labor); furthermore, because nearly all seniors receive some social security it does not mark one group as "needy." Similar to distinctions that are often made between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, senior vouchers seem to carry less stigma and be better utilized than WIC and food stamps at the market.

Despite the criticisms of these systems and the way they are implemented at the market, the fact that they are employed at all does show a level of commitment to making the market a space where people receiving benefits can access food. The fact that the food stamp system is a complex system to navigate also reinforces this in a strange way because it is clear the market organizers recognized the complexity of the system and went ahead and implemented it anyway. Furthermore, even while I had to teach the farmers how to use the food stamps, they were all extremely welcoming of their use. The helpfulness I received from the farmers seemed to extend beyond just selling another piece of produce, and I frequently felt like they were sending signals either through their body language or actions (for example telling me just to take my food with me before I had returned with my card) that they were happy to sell to someone on food stamps. Perhaps food stamps purchases allowed them to see the market's potential to be more inclusive. Despite this, it seems that the use of these benefits is quite limited and that overall based on the complexity of the system does not seem a good way to increase market participation.

The Construction of the White, Heterosexual Family

During a busy a Saturday the market is abuzz with activity and the wide areas between the stands on the main street of the market are filled with people working their way from one stand to another. While there certainly seem to be more women than men at the market, it is not an overwhelmingly feminized space. In fact, an examination of the consumers and farmers suggests a relative equality in terms of gender at the market. As I've argued earlier, the market has a white, middle-class feel, and while my observations reflect similar gendered trends that others have found—that there are more women at the market than men—the market did not feel overtly gendered, as it often felt white and middle-class. An examination of the vendors at the market confirms this impression.

After observing the market for two months I began compiling demographic data about the vendors. Having a great deal of time at the market I finally felt that had a good idea of what was "normal" for the market and each stand, thus when the Country Fair, a large festival, took place during the summer, I knew that it affected who was selling at the market and which vendors were there, that this day was an anomaly of sorts. When compiling my demographic data I was able to note if there were any stands that were being staffed in a way that was not standard. Based on my observations I found that the numbers of men and women working on an average Saturday to be fairly equitable. On average there were 41 women working on a given Saturday versus 35 men. Examining how the selling of particular products is gendered is quite complicated in certain cases. For example, who sells highly seasonal foods—such as berries—often varies greatly depending on the stand; one stand might have a single man selling and another might

have two women. The selling of flowers, on the other hand, tended to retain similar demographics; based on my observations if the flower seller is white she will also be female; however, if the sellers are Asian-American they will likely be a heterosexual couple.

There are some products, however, that are clearly stratified by gender. I found that selling nursery plants, baked goods, and honey were completely male dominated. For example, of the five nursery plant stands, all were run by a single male, as were both the honey stands. When I asked a beekeeper at the market why only men sold honey, he told me that he thought it might be because women were not strong enough to care for the hives. With the exception of flowers, there was no single sphere that was clearly female dominated. Figure 1 shows the gendered distribution of labor at market stands when more than one person was working and shows that the majority of stands are run are by male/female dyads. Produce in particular tends to be sold in male/female dyads. Furthermore, if there are an uneven number of workers at the stand the extra person is nearly always female. The selling of produce—the product that is the backbone of the market—tended to be dominated by male/female dyads.

Beyond who was working at each stand, my observations seem to suggest that, at the market at least, the labor and tasks were distributed fairly equitably between men and women working the produce stands. The importance of this cannot be overstated. While there were some examples of stands that were run by men who had women working for them—the consignment stand run by the market manager was an example of this—most

of the stands were run by couples who seemed to be equal partners at the market who engaged in similar tasks and seem to have equal decision making power. Typically both

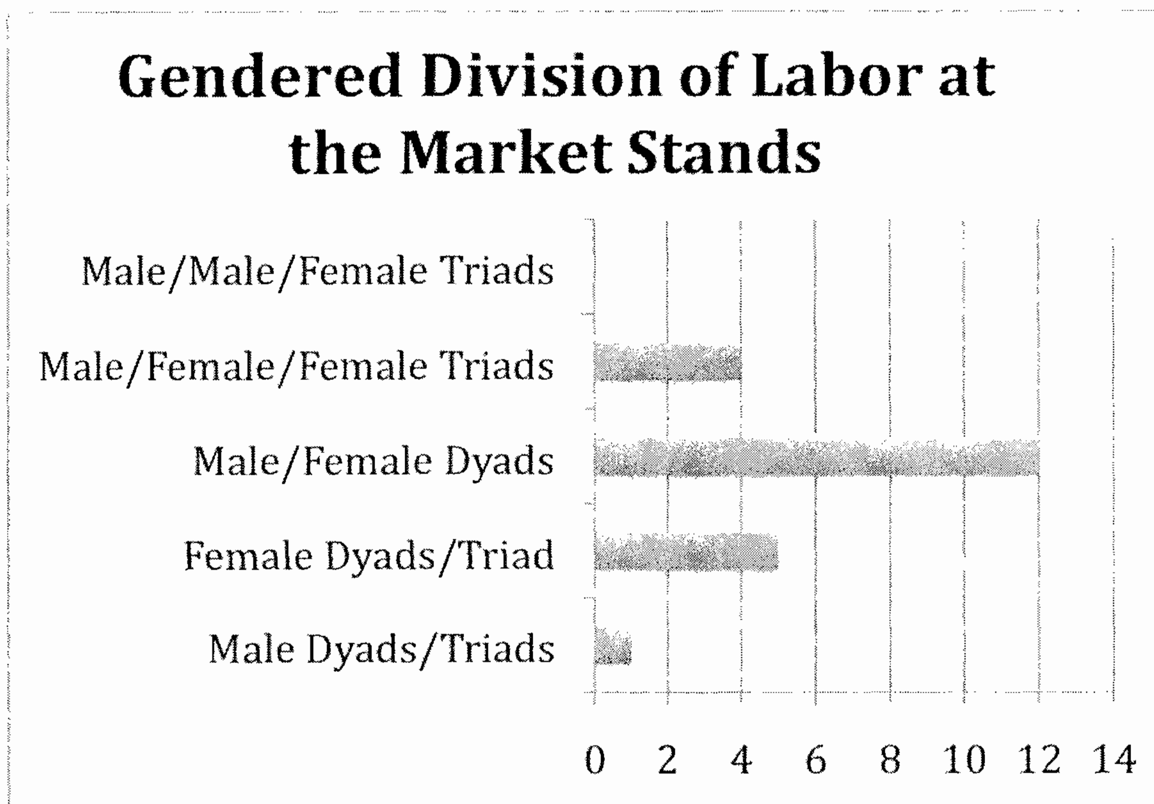


Figure 1: Gendered division of labor at the market (for stands with more than one seller)

men and women would unload the vans and would then work together to set up the stands. It was not unusual to see a woman hauling a giant tote of potatoes out to restock the stand or unusual to see a man carefully eyeing the stand to find a blemished beet top. I found that within the specific sphere of selling produce, there were clearly opportunities for women's participation in sustainable agriculture.

However, while this seeming equality is laudable, it is important not to overlook other salient dimensions. The equality that women seem to experience is an equality that often seems tied to other kinds of privilege. First, the majority of women (and men) working at the market are actually the farmers, and thus have the benefit of white and class privilege at least based on my interviews with the farmers. (Although, the larger and better capitalized the farm, the more likely they are to hire youthful, white men and (more often) white women to work the booths.) Thus, the opportunities the farm women seem to experience cannot be understood apart from these racialized and classed dimensions. In short, the opportunities for the women farmers working at the market seem tied to the privileges that are linked with being a white, middle-class women.

Furthermore, based on my observations, a woman's presence at the market often relies on her relationship to a male partner (usually her husband), something that was affirmed during my farm visits and interviews. As this suggests, women's opportunities at the market were further complicated by the fact that women's participation was always in a context that affirmed the literal or symbolic importance of the white, heterosexual family. In many cases the dyads at the market were heterosexual couples, but in all cases they seem to affirm a particular vision of the heterosexual family. I use this idea of "heterosexuality" in both an actual and abstract sense. Based on farm visits and getting to know the market community, I know that many of these "couples" are indeed married couples, and it seems clear that this does convey the actual, material benefits of heterosexual marriage, for example in terms of off-farm earnings potential. Yet this vision of heterosexuality at the market does not always indicate a formal married

relationship; ultimately the partnering of men and women at the market is also symbolic and frames heterosexuality as "normal." A friend of mine who used to sell at the market said that everyone always assumed that her business partner was her mother. However, she was a lesbian and it bothered her that everyone assumed this sort of family relationship instead of realizing that there could be any number of reasons that two women were working together. But I believe the market is constructed in a way that makes it easy to make that mistake.

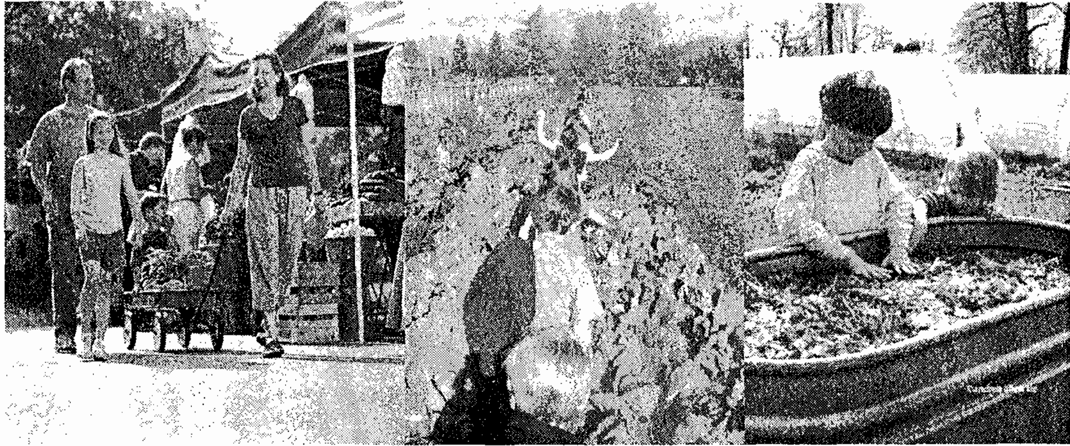
This heterosexual coupling at the majority of the stands reflected an image of the white, heterosexual family that was everywhere once I observed it. For example, many of the farms at the market specifically use images of "the family," meaning a white, heterosexual family, to sell their farms to consumers. This was perhaps most apparent at the "Pick-A-Farmer" event. Figure 1 is a photomontage that was put together for this event, an event where the farmers spend an evening selling shares of their CSA. (CSA stands for Community-Supported Agriculture and means that you buy shares of the food that will be produced that season. You are investing in the farm early in the season and share in what it produces). This is an event where the farms essentially have nothing to sell yet. The farmers are selling shares of food that might be produced, and to do that they need to sell a particular image of what their farm has to offer. In this image, while there are four images of single men, all the women in the photos are accompanied by a man, and in most cases also children.

Figure 2: "Pick-A-Farmer" photomontage

When I attended this event the role of the family in marketing the farm became even more apparent. To promote themselves they all had big poster boards with images of the farm in order to familiarize people with what they do. I found that even though on most of the farms I interviewed there were no children present, images of children were very often used to sell the farms.

The cover of the Oregon Farmer's Market directory (see figure 3) and other pictures taken from the websites where I conducted visits (see figures 4 and 5) offered

images typical of the ones that I found at the "Pick-A-Farmer" event and were typical of images used at the market itself, where vendors also commonly display photos of their farms.



Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c: Cover of the Oregon Farmer's Market directory [left], photograph of children in cabbage used to advertise market farms [middle], and photograph of children enjoying a water trough used to advertise market farms [right].

The photos tend to romanticize the idea of the family as well as the roles for children at the market and on the farms. These are happy images with the sun shining and children literally frolicking down a row of cabbage. The image of children can be seen as representing multiple ideologies that are present at the market: these images suggest the ways that sustainable farming preserves the environment for future generations as well as the ways sustainable food helps young, growing bodies thrive. But these images also suggest the ways that the white, heterosexual family is used to sell the idea of sustainable food. Sustainable agriculture as constructed at this Northwest Farmers' Market seems to

privilege the white, heterosexual family and ultimately links the wholesomeness of sustainable food to the perceived wholesomeness of this hegemonic family form.

This idea of children and the family as a marketing tool was pointed out to me as I conducted a farm visit at Winding Road Farm with one of the operators. It was a beautiful day and I mentioned to the farmer how lovely the land was. She noted that the aesthetic beauty of the land was actually a good selling point of the farm, that consumers liked how beautiful the farm was. I then I mentioned that her kids were pretty cute too as they worked with the animals and she said, you know the kids are "huge, it really is a selling point for people, I don't mean to diminish it, like it's like I'm using my kids that way, but it's really helpful." In the selling and marking of the farms "the family" becomes an important element in the production and selling of food, and the idea of the white nuclear family becomes written onto the space through these kinds of images.

Furthermore, for the consumers of the market, it was clear from my interviews that the idea of the family plays an important part in their vision of sustainable agriculture. When I asked consumers what makes sustainable agriculture different from conventional agriculture, 1/4 of the consumers mentioned the idea of the family farm and families working the land together as what makes food at the market different than food at a conventional grocery store. For example, a 28-year-old woman noted, "Farmer's Markets are really small and family oriented, and are kinda like, you know, that stereotypical farm that you see on the television." In fact, some of the language of the consumers seems to romanticize this idea of the family on the land. For these consumers, the vision of family as tied to sustainable agriculture reflects their own assumptions and

beliefs about what sustainable agriculture should be. A 41-year-old woman envisioned the farmers as being familial: "Most likely they are family members, [a] closer group of people, family run most the time. It is colorful, it is bright it is vibrant. It is a sense of lost traditional values in terms of community. The Farmer's Market seems to be more like family type farms." While a 61 one-year-old man noted, "oh, I would imagine that they're probably smaller and operate on a much smaller ah, like a smaller scale within maybe a family and a few close friends. I like the atmosphere, the friendliness, the family orientedness."

Of course, I do not know for certain that when the consumers talked about "the family" they were specifically referring to the white, heterosexual family; however, I think the use of phrases like "stereotypical farm," and "lost traditional values" and even "family orientedness" are phrases that suggest the consumers are using an idea of the family that is in line with hegemonic visions of it. In other words, there is nothing in any of my interviews that suggest that the vision of families that the consumers are referring to works to deconstructs a hegemonic vision of the family or the "family farm." Of course, the ways the farms are marketed to the consumer also do nothing to invoke a different image of "the family."

Furthermore, while it is clear that "the family" is used to market the farms—that the idea of "the family" is something that draws at least some consumers to the market—it is also a space that is quite welcoming to consumer families, something that is demonstrated by the number of children who explore the market with their parent(s). It was clearly a "family friendly" space where children were often openly welcomed.

However, the same cannot be said for the workers at the market. At a basic level the market seems to resemble other work arenas where workers are androcentrized. That is, it is assumed that workers either do not have children or that they have "wives" to care for those children (Acker 1990). Based on my observations it is clear that very few people are able to combine the work of selling at the market with the work of parenting. Perhaps this was particularly salient to me because collecting my data meant leaving my one-year old at home. I was struck by how the space was family friendly for the consumers, but not the vendors. So while the role of the family at the market is important in its marketing and its consumption, the workers at the market still must adhere to an androcentric vision of their labor that denies their family responsibilities.

Thus, despite the emphasis on the family—and the large presence of families shopping at market—like most other occupations, working at the market is a space that assumes workers do not have family responsibilities. Typically workers at the market could not combine their family obligations with their work obligations. They had to find something else to do with their children while they worked. This became quite salient to me one day I sat on a bench watching the market and a man brought a little girl, probably age four or five, to see her mom who was working the cash register at the largest stand at the market. The little girl was absolutely heartbroken, crying and sniffling; she wanted to stay with her mom. Her mother took a few minutes and consoled her as someone else took over the register and explained that she had to work, but the little girl clung to her mom. As her dad walked away with the crying little girl I imagined her mother felt quite torn. I was struck by the ways the family and children were a part of the space, but

almost exclusively existed as consumers. While I am not necessarily advocating for child labor at the market, it is striking that while images of children play an important role in constructing sustainable agriculture—their role at the market is defined almost exclusively through their consumption.

There were, however, a few exceptions that complicated this conclusion. First, there were a number of older teenaged children and grandchildren of farmers who sold at the market. One of the farmers I interviewed routinely had her teenaged children running the booth at the market. Furthermore, two of the very short season berry stands were also run by young family members: one stand was run by the farmers two granddaughters and the other stand by a rotating set of sons of a Russian immigrant farmer. So there does seem to be some role for families and older children. Additionally, there were some young children participating on the vendor side of the market. Specifically, the Asian immigrants who sold flowers often brought children with them; in fact, at one stand it was not uncommon to see up to three children. These children often played an important role as translators and sign makers at the market, making the skills they bring essential to their family's success. I think it is important to note that these farmers did not use images of the family (or really any images) to sell their products—the idea of the family was simply not romanticized in the same fashion among the Asian immigrant farmers despite the clear importance the family played in their success at the market. Another stand run by a family who sold fresh-caught fish at the market often brought a very young child and a newborn baby to the stand. At this stand the grandmother of the children offered samples and interacted with the consumers while the father ran up the sales and answered

questions. The mother mostly looked after the children and did small tasks around the stand. These farmers who bring their children have certain things in common: they are outside the core group of the most visible farmers, they sell at the spatial periphery of the market, and they are all small enough that they staff their own booths. This is compared to the woman with the crying daughter who was an employee at the flagship stand at the market. While there is no question that laws protecting children against exploitation in the public labor market are a positive step, these few vendors suggest that there are ways of incorporating the demands of parenting with the demands of labor in ways that do not exploit the labor of children.

Gender Equity: Buying and Cooking Sustainable Food

While there was certainly a sizeable male presence at the market, particularly at the Saturday market, I found based on my observations that the actual purchasing and selecting of the food at the market was highly feminized. As I sat and watched at each stand there were typically four to five women who would make a purchase for every one man. It was fascinating to watch the number of men get smaller and smaller the closer one actually got to the cash registers. This makes sense when we think about how the care work of cooking for one's family is gendered. Women are typically responsible not only for preparing a family's meals, but also for doing the emotional labor associated with that preparation—for example making a grocery list (which requires a sort of running inventory of what foods are in the house), and remembering the food "rules" of the house (who is allergic to certain foods and who dislikes which foods). Thus the act of

preparing a meal extends far beyond chopping and baking and requires often intense amounts of invisible labor. As other scholars have noted, shopping at a farmers' market and the preparation that comes with it is often much more labor intensive than compared to purchasing food available at a conventional grocery store (Allen and Sachs 2007). A number of women that I casually chatted with at the market mentioned the challenge of using the food they found there; they noted that they were attracted to some of the more "unusual" foods like kale or kohlrabi but did not necessarily know the best ways to prepare it. This led to Internet searchers and trips to the library and bookstore for new cookbooks learn how to prepare these foods. In fact, I noted at least one farm that delivered their CSA boxes to the market included recipes in those boxes to help the consumers prepare the food.

The men's seeming disinvestment in cooking and the labor around cooking was confirmed in my interviews, where I found cooking tasks where mostly handled by women. Specifically, I found that while there were ten respondents that reported a male as responsible for cooking, eight of these men did not live with women. Thus there were only two reports of men who were solely responsible for cooking where there was a woman in the household. On the other hand, 25 of my 48 respondents reported that women were solely responsible for cooking in their households and of these only seven women lived in women-only households. The rest of the respondents reported that the cooking was split in their households either between married couples or between roommates. Interestingly, the couples most likely to report splitting the cooking were at the market together and did the interviews together. One could either conclude that these

couples work together at both the market and at home or that one feels compelled to report splitting the labor when one's partner is present. In fact, I found myself a little skeptical about some of the reports of the labor being "split." For example one man told me that he had decided that he and his wife were going on the raw food diet and that although she had done the cooking in the family, he was going to be in charge of making the smoothies; this division of labor did not necessarily seem evenly split to me. Another man in his seventies reported that he makes breakfast and that his wife makes the afternoon and evening meals, which suggests that while they are sharing duties they are not particularly evenly split. Tellingly, all but one of the respondents with children reported that the woman did the cooking. So while women were largely responsible for cooking, if children were present that responsibility only seemed to increase.

Examined from this lens, the way gender is performed in this space is extraordinarily complicated. Men are clearly present at the market and are frequently responsible for their children in this space. For example, one of the first patterns I noticed at the market was the number of men who were wearing babies in backpack. In some ways the market seems clearly counter hegemonic and seems to open up the possibility for a new level of gender equity where men have greater responsibility for the care work of their children. Of course, I would certainly not argue that sustainable agriculture is causing this male involvement; instead, I argue that the market and sustainable agriculture more generally is part of a cultural shift that is attractive to families who are already invested in certain kinds of alternative practices.

As a feminist and a parent, it was wonderful to see men taking on a more responsibility for caring for their children in this space, but it also seemed to privilege a very normative vision of the family as a two-parent, straight arrangement. This is certainly something I feel in my own life. While my (male) partner and I are very conscious about raising our son and running our household in a very egalitarian way, a way that we would like to be considered "alternative to the mainstream," we are continually struck by how often we receive comments about what a "nice" or "cute" family we are. This is particularly pronounced when we walk our old yellow-lab. Thus, perhaps like other families at the market, while we are attempting to live in a way that is "counter-hegemonic," we literally embody the idea of the "traditional" or "nice" family: white, heterosexual, young (but not too young), and middle-class. And as such we are frequently "rewarded" with overt public approval for our family. In the space of the market, a similar phenomenon may be at work, where a particular image of the family—a white, heterosexual one—is what becomes most salient despite attempts on the part of some consumers to disrupt traditional or conventional patterns in the family.

Race, Whiteness, and Sustainability

As I discuss above, the images used to represent the market suggest that the idea of the white heterosexual family is integral to the construction of sustainable farming. Despite these images, however, not all the vendors at the market are white. There are a number of stands at the market that are operated by Asian immigrants. The market is arranged in a U-shape with most the stands in the busiest middle section and with two

arms extending off this middle section onto side rows where the number of vendors waxes and wanes. The Asian immigrants are always assigned these side streets (see figure 6). The assigning of space is a somewhat complex process at the market, but typically comes down to a vendor's "seniority" at the market. Seniority, according to the Lane County Farmers Market Member Handbook, is based 40% on the gross recorded sales, 40% on the number of markets attended, and 20% as the total number of years the member has been a voting member of the market. Given that 40% of seniority is related to gross sales, it stands to reason that the larger, better marketed and capitalized stands will end up with better market position and will then be able to continue to maintain these better spots. On a number of occasions I watched the owner of the largest stand at the market telling the market manager that his stand did not have enough room or was at the wrong angle; the market manager, who is supposed to be in charge of the market, was extremely deferential dealing with the man. This seemed out of character for him based on other interactions I had observed. While it is not the least bit surprising, it is still worth mentioning that those at the market with the most selling power are able to use that power to position themselves to be even more successful at the market. It is difficult to imagine the Asian immigrant vendors complaining about their position to the market manager and have much luck in getting their stalls changed.

Normally at the market there are between three and four Asian immigrant families that set up and sell at the market. All these nonwhite vendors specialize in selling bouquets of flowers as their primary products. So while they operate on the literal periphery of the market, the goods they specialize in are also outside the core products

the market is known for. There is one other stand that specializes in selling flowers, but this stand is typically run by a white woman and is located in the "core" area of the market. Occasionally the Asian immigrant farmers add other items; many of the food items they sell are specially coded as "ethnic," for example pea tendrils and cilantro with roots.

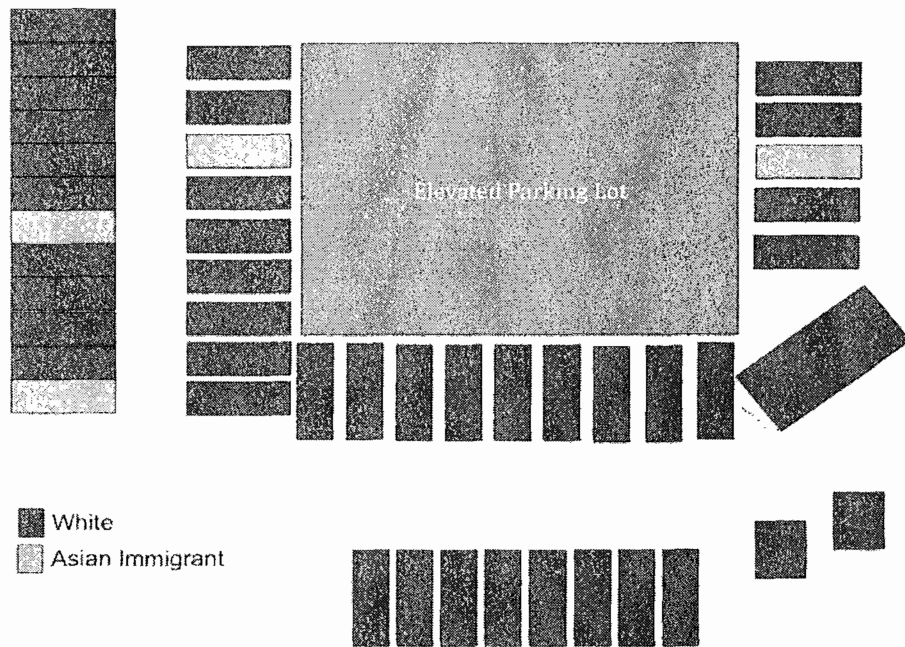


Figure 4: Racial distribution of stands at the Northwest Farmers' Market

As many of the consumers and farmers alluded to in our discussions, eating is an intimate affair and you need to trust the person who provides your food. As I observed the flowers being sold by the Asian immigrants it struck me that these farmers mostly

specialized in products that are not consumable (something that seems different from other markets I have visited). The reasons that these Asian immigrants focus on selling flowers is likely quite complicated, having to do with everything from the land they use, their particular farming experience, and the ability to fill a niche.[8] The fact that they mostly focus on selling goods that are not consumable, however, is worth noting.

Moreover, unlike the stands on the main section of the market, the stands on the sides tend to look more utilitarian. Especially among the Asian immigrants, signs tend to be written with black markers on torn pieces of cardboard and produce displayed on plastic tables sans tablecloths and wicker baskets. In this same section an elderly white woman and one of her grandchildren runs a stand; she simply backs her pickup truck with camper shell into the stand, has shelves that come from the back of the truck, and displays her produce in miniature plastic laundry baskets. The fact that the stands are on the periphery of the market is a sort of metaphor for the market in general—the people selling in these areas are somehow outside the core of "sustainable" agriculture, a fact that is only reinforced by the "seniority" system that allows the most profitable stands to remain in the core area of the market. If these profitable and recognizable stands were moved off the main street and onto the side street it would likely draw more consumers to the less "senior" stands and perhaps it would open up the space in ways that allowed for vendors of color to have more opportunities to be part of the core of the market.

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[8] As noted in my methods chapter, I attempted to interview these vendors on a number of occasions, but language barriers made it difficult. Furthermore, I got the impression they were concerned about allowing me to interview them for other reasons that I could not ever quite make out. Eventually I quit asking them about interviews.

This issue of land ownership at the market can also help to explain the racialized inequality at the market. As researchers have noted, land ownership among people of color (and African Americans in particular) is grossly unequal. This is despite the necessity of labor from people of color to the success of both conventional and sustainable agriculture; according to Allen "ethnic minorities have not had equal access to land, capital, or decision making in the food and agriculture system" (Allen 1993:148).

I think it is important to note, that access to farm land does more than just allow people of color opportunities to farm. Other research suggest that when people of color have access to land they are more likely to sell their food in underserved communities of color and that people of color are more likely to shop at farmer's markets where they feel they have a connection to the farmers. But at the market where I observed, the "core" vendors as well as the images presented where overwhelmingly concerned with whiteness and the white nuclear family. I think this reflects both the racialized make-up of the farms as well as the ways whiteness may be written into ideas about sustainable agriculture. As Slocum (2007) notes, "Whiteness is hegemonic in the US; it is dominant regardless of the number of bodies in a certain place. …whiteness… is not about counting all the whites and arguing that whiteness is 'more' or 'less' in places with greater or fewer white people." Rather, this is about an image, an idealized representation that relies on more than numbers—it is about space, geography, what people do, the roles they have, in the market.

My observations at the market focused on understanding how race was constructed in this space rather than counting bodies in part because there were so few

people of color at the market. As I noted in my literature review, the research on race and farmers' markets come to similar conclusions: sustainable agriculture is a space of whiteness. My observations only supported these conclusions.

Interestingly, however, my observations were often in contrast to the interviews I conducted with consumers, most of whom saw the space as inclusive. In part, I think some of this may be tied to how we were looking at the market. To most of the consumers, the market was clearly quite beloved and does seem to be able to absorb people who might very well be ostracized in other spaces. I think because many of the market consumers may feel "othered" in the consumer oriented spaces of contemporary capitalism, like the typical shopping mall, they are particularly attuned to making the market seem welcoming. Furthermore, in all my observations I saw nothing on the part of the consumers that would suggest that people of color were not welcome in the space. In fact, nearly every weekend and many weekdays an older African American man, Sam, would set up at the market and play his guitar. He seemed to be a well-known and well-liked member of the community. As he played his music people would drop change into his guitar case and he would pause for a moment and encourage them to take one of the "Our Town is Too Great for Hate" stickers out of his case. I think in part the consumers use his presence and the presence of other people of color at the market to construct the space as inclusive. In part, I think they also recognize that they have good intentions, that they want to be inclusive and they reflect these beliefs onto the space itself. They see Sam handing out his anti-hate stickers and see a rainbow community.

Yet while the consumers at the market want to believe it is an inclusive, welcoming space, this does not make the space any less white. I had never actually been to the Farmers' Market before I began this project; instead my partner and I tried to grow as much of our food as possible and did our grocery shopping across the river, in a neighboring working-class community at a large discount grocery store that catered to a quite economically and racially diverse set of clientele. Thus, after a shopping at WinCo for many years, the whiteness of the market, even in a white community in Oregon, was surprising to me. My years living in a racially diverse neighborhood and shopping at a racially diverse grocery store that was only a 15-minute bus ride from the market helped to shape my observations at the market. Perhaps the market looked white to me because where I lived and did most my shopping there was a large Hispanic presence; for instance, I frequently bought tamales out of a van that drove around my neighborhood and learned a little Spanish from some of the children who lived one door down and liked to play in my yard. While I did not live far from the market, the difference in the racial make-up between my neighborhood and the market was a stark contrast. This is not to say my working-class neighborhood was a space of easygoing racial inclusion. My white neighbors were convinced that our Hispanic neighbors were stealing cars in the neighborhood and "jumping over fences with knives." But, when I attended the market, everything from the foods available to the consumers buying those foods constructed the market in a way that saw the *ideal type* of consumer as white and middle-class.

This is not to deny the real social value of sustainable agriculture as offered by this farmers' market. Often consumers really were getting a chance to interact with the

farmers who grew their food; I found it particularly refreshing to see farmers with high paying off farm jobs taking their Saturdays to set up their own tables and interact with their consumers. Furthermore, the more I got to know the farmers and the market community the more I realized that many of the farmers were giving up material wealth to provide sustainable food to the market community. Furthermore, as many consumers noted, making the market a priority was not always convenient; yet they still managed to prioritize supporting the market despite these inconveniences, and their support of the market is critical to its success.

Yet, I made two observations at the market that I found quite contrary to a vision of inclusiveness. It is difficult to weigh the importance of these observations, because on the one hand they were relatively rare, but on the other hand, given the small number of people of color, particularly Hispanic people, at the market these observations stuck out to me. The first observation happened during the early morning hours while I watched the vendors setting up. During those early morning hours, I watched a Hispanic man haul vegetables from a truck to the stand where two Hispanic women were arranging the vegetables in the display. While the Hispanic workers were busying themselves with the task of setting up the stand—a stand I always found particularly beautiful because of the ways the vegetables were stacked in such large, yet neat piles—two young, white women busied themselves with writing out the price list for the stand and giving directions to the Hispanic man and women. As I watched the Hispanic man hauling heavy boxes from the truck and the Hispanic women laboring to unload box and after box under the direction of the young white women, I found myself thinking: why I had never seen the Hispanic

workers during any of my other observations? Then, before the market was opened the man and woman got in the farm truck and drove away leaving the young, white women in their summery cotton dresses to work the stand. Over the course of the summer I watched this same scene take place whenever I observed the market before it opened.

This was not the only stand to do something similar. I observed something quite similar at the flower stand that occupied a small area in the core area of the market; a white middle aged woman usually runs the stand. Fragrant peony blossoms and long trailing houseplants surrounded her as she quickly assembles stems of flowers into bouquets for waiting consumers. Yet, during the set up process she is not alone. Two Hispanic men who did the heavy labor of hauling bucket after bucket of flowers from a large van to the stand assist her. The morning I observed it was clear that they were behind schedule. The woman running the stand was agitated and the language barrier between her and the men, who appeared to only speak Spanish, only exacerbated her frustration. There was an awkward, aggravated dance between the men and the woman as she would shout "el fronte, el fronte" to the men unloading the van trying to convey that she wanted a specific flower from the front of the van. I felt uncomfortable observing these interactions that normally take place behind closed doors in workspaces.

However, what I watched next only affirmed to me the ways that people who are poor and of color can literally become invisible in the space. The stand was being set up quite late; it was graduation morning at the local university and they likely had orders to fill before setting off to the market, but before they could even finish setting up, customers were eager to buy bouquets. The first consumer looked affluent in her large

sunglasses and immediately began demanding that certain flowers be removed from the bouquet she had selected, pointing to the flowers she liked and indicating that she wanted them in her bouquet. At the same time two Asian American women came to the stand and begin selecting armfuls of flowers. The flower stand is one of the smallest at the market. Buckets overflowing with flowers line a long narrow aisle less than five feet wide. Yet, all four women were crowded into this tiny space, and all of them seemed hurried. The proprietor seemed caught off guard by the rush of customers and flustered that the stand was not completely set up. In spite of all this, somehow in this tiny space the two Hispanic men continued to set up. With buckets in hand they ducked between the woman and everyone carried on as if the men were not even there. No one backed up to let them through; no one made eye contact with them. Only the woman running the stands seemed to acknowledge their presence as she occasionally yelled something like, "where are the scissors?!" Soon, the customers were taken care of, the stand was set up, and the Hispanic men left in the van as the woman put the finishing touches on the stand.

Both this example and the example of the farm stand above suggest that while the labor of Hispanic people may be necessary for at least some of the farmers, this labor is hidden in a variety of ways. This is not say that all the farms engage in these practices. As I noted earlier, it is quite the contrary: most the stands are actually run by the farmers themselves, farmers who are mostly white. Yet the observations at these two stands suggest that racialized labor is hidden from the buying public. These stands white wash their wares by using Hispanic laborers for set up but not as the public faces of the farm itself. Furthermore, customers (at least the ones at the flower shop) are implicated in this

as well by not seeing this labor even when it is right in front of them. I was shocked at how the men at the flower stand seemed to work completely unseen in a space no bigger than a small bathroom.

Yet the space of the market is extraordinarily complex. This same morning I watched another Hispanic man help set up a produce stand, but his relationship with his coworkers at the stand was markedly different than at the other stands I described. It is worth noting that this man also looked different from the Hispanic men and woman who were setting up the other two stands; for example, he was lighter skinned and taller. However at this stand, rather than doing the heavy, manual labor alone, everyone working at the stand came together to load the van and to set up the produce. Then, when the stand was set up, they sat down together on a bench behind the display and rested together as they enjoyed a brief break before the opening. Even after the market opened they all worked together selling produce and replenishing the food. I was struck by how different this was from my other observations. This was clearly a team of people who worked together quite well and from my observations seemed to be treated equitably. He was not treated like a "Hispanic farm labor" in the ways the people setting up the two other stands were. I think this is the image that consumers and farmers alike have when they think of the market as an inclusive space.

I think it is important to understand that if a consumer were to visit the market more than likely they would never see the first two cases. If they arrived even 10 minutes after opening they would only see the beautifully set up stands run by white people. They might see one Hispanic man working at the stand with his friends or Sam playing

the guitar and perhaps in these moments see the space as inclusive. But these moments of inclusiveness does not take away from the whiteness at the market; instead I think they suggest the complexity of the market, the ways that personal beliefs about race can affect the space. Clearly the different vendors have different perspectives about race, but overall the presentation at the market, particularly in terms of vendors, is a presentation of whiteness.

But I want to be clear that, as Slocum reminds us, "while it should be said that there is something white about alternative food practice, that 'something white' is not equivalent to 'something negative'" (521). Like Slocum, I want to emphasize that "Whiteness coheres in alternative food practice in the act of 'doing good', a productive moment, that should not be condemned outright." (526). Overall, I would argue that the construction of the market as a space that privileges whiteness (and in particular the white, heterosexual family) may end up limiting participation in sustainable agriculture. This, however, does not have to take away from the good that sustainable agriculture does nor does it take away from the sacrifices that consumers often make to support sustainable farmers and the market. Furthermore, in a society where the white, heterosexual family is hegemonic in nearly every space, it should be clear that the vendors and farmers are not necessarily responsible for creating this form of inequality. Instead, the market is a space where the dominant family form in the culture is maintained in part through the invisibility of privilege.

Conclusion

There is little doubt in my mind that people involved in sustainable agriculture either as consumers or farmers want sustainable agriculture to be inclusive, especially when one considers the mission statement of the market and statements from both consumers and farmers about wanting people to feel welcome. Yet it seems that despite these good intentions certain inequalities that are certainly present and hegemonic in the larger culture are reproduced at the market at well. Unfortunately, undoing systems of inequality that are part of the larger culture is going to require more than good intentions or an articulate mission statement can deliver. Making sustainable agriculture a space for everyone, if that really is an intention, will require the kind of careful planning and action that is in some ways are a hallmark of sustainable agriculture. Industrial agriculture has always seemed like a juggernaut, a force that epitomized industrial capitalism and has been supported by huge government subsidies. Yet sustainable agriculture, one farmers' market at a time, seems to be shifting this playing field and making people think differently about the food they eat and the way they relate to the people producing that food. When I think about this I am often overwhelmed; it is tangible proof of the kind change that is possible. Some people I have talked to about my project have suggested that I am expecting too much of a farmers' market; they often acknowledge that markets tend to be white and perhaps middle class, but they suggest that sustainable agriculture should not expect farmers or consumers to have to take on the project of making sustainable agriculture more inclusive. The dominant assumption is that people who are

interested in being involved will become involved, and you cannot force people to shop at a farmers' market.

Many of the inequalities that I have described in this chapter are part of much larger structural and institutional systems of inequality. I am certainly not arguing that the "market" is creating gender inequality and "making" women take on the labor of cooking for their families. Yet the ability to sell this food at the market relies on someone who is able to not only go to the market to buy the food but also someone to do the labor of turning the food into dinner. Ultimately if making sustainable agriculture more egalitarian and inclusive is an important to goal, and I believe it is, change will need to take place on a structural level. If we deem it important that sustainable, local food is available to everyone, then we need to have markets in places where working class people live, where people of color live. Or perhaps more importantly, we need to advocate for housing policies that do not lead to class and race segregation in the first place.

If this mission is important, if we want sustainable agriculture to be more inclusive, we need to do the work implementing structural changes that support this goal. However, before that, we have to acknowledge that these inequalities exist in the space of the farmers' market, that they are not the product of some natural phenomenon but are socially constructed and that some of us benefit from these constructions.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSUMERS

During my observations at the market, it was clear that many people are "regulars" in this space. There is a particular crowd that comes early before the heat of the day; they line up before the stands open and are assured first choice of the food. There is the afternoon crowd that wanders around a bit more lazily, taking in the music and enjoying the blueberries they've purchased as they browse the market. The market is often a place to run into and chat with people you might not normally see in the course of your week. In fact, people recognizing one another from a distance and stopping to chat frequently punctuates the experience of browsing at the market. During my observations I frequently ran into people that I knew—including my dissertation chairs with their families, the midwife who delivered my son, classmates, and students. The market is a place where people come together for the common purpose of buying locally grown food and often to enjoy summer days surrounded by the buzz of fellow shoppers. The market, in other words, is a space defined by a sense of community and a shared commitment to supporting local and organic food, a space that often seems as much about socializing and communal values than it is about purchasing food.

In this chapter I use interviews with consumers to understand how they understand the space of the Northwest Farmers' Market and the project of sustainable agriculture in general. I see the consumers at the market as key to understanding how the idea of sustainable agriculture is constructed because without consumers there would literally be no market. The fact that the market relies on the support of the consumers and their commitment to sustainable agriculture is what makes the interviews with consumers so important to this project. The ways that consumers understand the market and sustainable agriculture is a window into how sustainable agriculture is understood by those who are committed to its success.

This chapter explores how the participants at the Northwest Farmers' Market define and describe their fellow consumers at the market, how they understand barriers to participation at the market, and ends with a discussion of the consumers' understanding of "sustainability." By examining consumers' perceptions of the market, who shops there, and why, I hope to better understand how consumers see this space the project of sustainability. To that end, this chapter uses interviews with consumers at the Northwest Farmers' Market to explore how such consumers understand the market, sustainable foods, and the community of people who frequent the market. I asked them demographic questions as well as questions about why they shopped at the market, whom they thought shopped at the market, why more people did not shop here, and how they define sustainability, among other questions.

Who Shops Here?

I begin this chapter by discussing consumer perceptions of who shops at the market. As I note in my Literature Review chapter, demographic surveys of the market find that the average consumer is a white, well-educated woman (Onianwa, Mojica, and Wheelock 2006; Walton, Kirby, Henneberry, and Agustini 2002). Furthermore, a number of scholars have suggested that farmers' markets are places of whiteness (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2007). For this portion of the project, I was concerned not only with my perceptions of the market as a researcher, but also with understanding how the consumers see the space. Thus, I specifically asked the consumers I interviewed about how they perceived the demographics of who was shopping at the market.

Given that this project is particularly concerned with issues of race, class, and gender equity I asked the consumers: "What kinds of people do you think shop at the market in terms of race, class, gender?" Race, class, and gender, of course, are notoriously difficult for many people to talk about; they often make people very uncomfortable. Importantly, these were also short, 10-minute interviews where I was not able to develop a real rapport with the respondents, so the responses were often quite short and perhaps not representative of how these individuals would have responded under different conditions. Nonetheless, the consumers I interviewed were all willing to engage with the question and all answered it. In my analysis of this data, I found patterns that suggested some of the different ways that the consumers saw the space. In this section I specifically address how the consumers talk about gender, race, and class. I also discuss the importance of age to their understanding of the space and close with the

consumers' tendency to use universalizing language while describing shoppers at the market.

One of my most colorful consumer interviews was with an 81-year old retired teacher. She made a point of talking about how "upscale handsome" many of the shoppers were and how the farmers who sell at the market looked "fit and trim," especially compared to some of the "chubs" she knows. Her point was that you could trust the farmers to sell you food that was nutritious because they were healthy looking and so were their customers. In a sense her observations reflected what I observed at the market as well. In fact, two others including a 61-year-old man mentioned that the people selling and buying the food other were "all skinny; all the people are skinny who sell this stuff, if you've ever noticed." The people shopping and selling the food were mostly people who by even today's relatively narrow standards seemed to fit a hegemonic vision of attractiveness, not necessarily in a fashion model type way, but in a white, middle-class, Northwest natural, outdoorsy, sandal wearing way.

Similar to the teacher's response were others who did not actually address the topics of the question I asked but answered with a humorous quip, perhaps speaking to the ways this question may have made consumers somewhat uncomfortable or perhaps simply speaking to a consumer's sense of humor. For example, one 45 year old woman joked, "Very attractive people," and then added with a slight grin "wouldn't you say?" Two respondents, both middle aged men, replied with, "cool people."

While these responses are certainly interesting and tell us something about how these consumers understand their fellow shoppers, one of the most common responses I

received to the question involved age as a category. In fact, 15 consumers discuss age in their answer. And while some of them also included other categories in their analysis (class for example), I found this particularity interesting because, while age is an important category of analysis, it was one I had not included. For these consumers, clearly the fact that there was a distribution of ages at the market left an impression on them. For example, a 41-year-old woman argued, "Right now it's the 20's to 30's that we are really starting to push because they are our future and the children of course it's amazing to see how many little preschools on Tuesday morning will take their children to the farmers' market to get them exposed." A 23-year-old female student argued it is "people that are more older people that like seem to be parents or even grandparents but um it's kind of wide open." A 61-year-old man noted, "I've seen all ages today, everybody wants to eat healthy." The consumers who included age seemed to be happy about the age distribution. In a society where there are often few public spaces where everyone from young children, to college students, to elderly people can come together, the intergenerational mingling did seemed to mark space in what I felt was a welcoming way.

I was somewhat surprised as I coded my data to find that although 15 consumers discussed age, given only 10 mentioned race and six mentioned gender, categories I specifically asked about and often reiterated if they didn't bring it up in their answer. In fact, so few people brought up gender and their answers were so short that it is difficult to theorize about their comments. Of the six who mentioned gender, three consumers said they found it to be equally mixed, while three said there were more women. A 27-year-

old woman noted, "I don't know, just like a good mix of the sexes"; this was echoed by a 59-year-old woman who said, "I think gender seems to be mixed to me." A 20 year-old male argued, "As far as gender goes I see both males and females." These comments were in contrast to those of a 33-year-old woman who said, "I do see typically more women" and a 32-year-old woman who noted, "I see more women than men." A 28-year-old woman's response that "It seems to be a lot of upper classed motherish ladies" was the only response to explicitly link gender with another category.

Ultimately (and in line with other researchers' findings) while my observations suggested that the market was indeed gendered, with women making most of the purchases, it was interesting how invisible these gender differences tended to be to consumers since the vast majority of them simply did not include gender despite the fact that the category was included in the question.

While most consumers did not comment on gender, 10 did mention race. However, many of those who included it seemed quite uncomfortable. As I noted earlier, race can be a very difficult topic to discuss under ideal conditions, so in a ten-minute interview in a public space these anxieties were likely particularly pronounced. In general, the responses that included a discussion of race reflect trends that are found in other research about race and whiteness, specifically, in Frankenberg's (1993) groundbreaking examination of whiteness.

More specifically, a number of consumer responses reflect what Frankenberg (1993) refers to as "color-blindness," where one does not acknowledge the influence that race has on one's social location. For example, the response from a 24-year-old woman

captures some of the discomfort that many respondents seemed to have with the question itself. She noted, "Well, it is a little more expensive than buying in the stores, so I imagine it's probably more middle-class, but [the town] itself seems like it's more of a liberal community and people are just more interested in their health and whatnot than maybe other places that just use just grocery stores. *So, I don't really know how to answer that question.* I'm not sure that race has anything to do with it." A 27-year-old woman started her response by saying, "Today I've seen all kinds of different people, I think they take the Oregon Trail food stamps here, I think, all the vendors, so you kind of cross socio-economic with having it more accessible like that. You know, I think there probably tends to be more people focused on eating organically and fresh, so maybe there's a certain cultural element there that you see more of." The woman ended the question by with, "Other than that, I think you can find just about, as diverse as [this town] is, you find just about every group represented here. We don't really have a lot of ethnic diversity, so *I don't think it's a fair question.*"

In fairness, this is a town that is mostly white, although it is not entirely so. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau 2009) reports that 85% of the county's population described themselves as non Hispanics whites; nearly seven percent of the county are people who described themselves as Latino or Hispanic, and these numbers are growing. There are various grocery stores in the area that reflect this shifting demographic, yet as a group, Hispanics are rarely represented at the market as either consumers or vendors. As in many places, however, this city does seem to be racially

segregated in terms of where people shop and live, so if one was not aware of the area's shifting demographic trends, it might be easy to overlook.

The responses that actually addressed race specifically were somewhat limited. Many of the responses, such as the two above, suggest a discomfort with discussing race, and these comments were not isolated; in fact, four, of the consumers immediately explained away any underrepresentation at the market with a "well it's just this town," with the understanding that since this Northwest town is not racially diverse then it is unnecessary to discuss race.

As I argued in the "Northwest Farmers' Market" chapter, I found the market to be a space where people of color, when they worked at the market, were frequently made invisible. In fact, while I had very few observations of people of color consuming at the market, I observed two instances that struck me as quite unusual. In the first, a Hispanic looking woman was trying to buy hot peppers. They were in a small basket labeled 5/$1. It seemed that she wanted to buy three rather than five peppers because she had three peppers in her hand and was asking: "how much?" The woman running the stand had no other customers but was quite curt and just kept saying: "five for a dollar." The woman would hold up three peppers and ask again: "how much?" Until finally, the woman running the stand took the peppers out the woman's hand and put them back in the basket—the implication was that she would not sell her three peppers. Finally, the woman trying to buy the peppers turned and left.

In another instance, a Hispanic-looking family arrived at a nursery stand; I had been observing from the parking lot above the stand for some time and was struck by

how this family made a direct line to this one particular stand and to a particular cactus that had the large flat paddles that are often used in Mexican cooking. The husband and the proprietor asked "how much" and then left while the wife and child stayed with the plant. I assumed that they had not brought enough money and he had to make a trip to an ATM to get more cash. What ensued was one of the most awkward interactions or lack of interactions I saw at the market. This particular stand is long and probably only 4 feet wide. The woman and her child stood next to the large cactus and the man running the stand managed to navigate the narrow stall without ever talking or making eye contact with the woman for what seemed like at least ten minutes. The market is a place where the proprietors are often very friendly; when I'm shopping they ask what I'm going to make with what I'm buying, if I like the weather, and a variety of other mundane but friendly questions. I felt so uncomfortable watching the interaction and could not understand why the man didn't just ask her a question about the cactus or smile at the little boy.

While in both these examples there could be any number of reasons the people running the stands interacted in the ways they did, it was hard not to at least wonder what role the racial dynamics played. The market has an aura of friendliness, but I kept wondering how it would feel to me if I had experienced one of these interactions. It also occurred to me that while there were a few instances at the market that seemed particularly racialized at least to me, they came out of many, many hours of observations. Furthermore, all the cases I observed of what may be described as racial inequality (both in this chapter and the previous chapter) were cases in which people of color where

interacting with white farmers or vendors either as employees or customers. Thus, except for the case of the flower seller I mentioned in the previous chapter, consumers were not a part of these interactions. For consumers who come to the market and get to work getting their food for the week, it is not surprising that they might not see or perhaps may not take note of these kind interactions or register them in the same way that I did as a researcher.

This perhaps explains why consumers who saw the market as white were in a small minority. Ultimately in my interviews only three consumers identified the market as mostly white; two of these were students. One 26-year-old female student noted, "Unfortunately, I see a lot of … white people, I think that part of that has to with the fact that this is [our town] and there are a lot of white people in [our town], more so than other races, but, yeah, I mean I think that's unfortunate, but that's mostly what I see." Another student, a 20-year-old male, was more matter of fact, saying, "I definitely see a broad range of people, I think most people who go there are liberal because they are looking for organic foods, I see more white people than I do others. As far as gender goes I see both males and females, age, probably mid age to older." The third person who noted that it was mostly white was the 81-year-old woman who found people at the market to be "fit and trim." She noted, "you don't see a great variety of races, that's something you don't notice, but I did notice that they look like liberal thinking people that I wouldn't mind knowing." This ability to "see" whiteness when one is white can be difficult given that whiteness is an "unmarked" category. Frankenberg argues that whiteness is "not so much

void or formlessness as norm" (198). Thus, because whiteness is the norm it is also often becomes invisible to those occupying this "unmarked" category.

Compared to the responses I received related to gender and race, I was surprised by consumers' seeming willingness to engage with issues of class at the market. Fourteen consumers included an analysis of class in their answer, which is not many more than the ten who discussed race; however, the consumers who discussed class did so in a way that often did not require much prompting. Furthermore, the responses were often much more developed and engaged. Instead of short one-sentence answers—the kind I often received regarding race and gender—the responses were often quite lengthy.

It was also interesting that that eleven of the fourteen consumers mentioned that they thought the market was marked as a middle or upper middle class space (the other three consumers thought "all classes" shopped at the market). This was a clear deviation from the frequent unease I encountered while discussing race with most of the consumers. The eleven consumers who mentioned the market being classed in their responses often said something similar to a 32-year-old man who noted, "It's definitely people who have a little more income" or the 24-year-old women who replied, "I feel like I see upper middle-class." Yet, while many people mentioned that they thought the market primarily attracted the upper and upper-middle class, six of the respondents were careful to point out that, despite this, they did not think the market was an exclusionary space. In fact, six of the eleven who mentioned that it was mostly middle class went on to point out, as the 32-year-old man did, "it's not necessarily a cross-section, but it's not exclusively anything," while the 24-year-old woman went on to note, "it's great that they

take WIC, that they can use their WIC coupons here." These consumers felt that while the market may be predominantly middle or upper class, there were reasons to believe that it was not an economically exclusive space. In fact, three people pointed out that they accept Food Stamps and WIC at the market. For example, one 32-year-old woman noted, "I would assume people are definitely middle class. I know that they take senior and WIC checks, but I've never seen anyone using them. It generally seems to be a bit of a more...middle class group of shoppers." And a 27-year-old woman noted, "I think they take the Oregon Trail food stamps here, I think, all the vendors, so you kind of cross socio-economic with having it more accessible like that." While these three specifically mentioned a benefit program, four others mentioned poorer consumers who shopped at the market. One 50-year-old male consumer noted, "Actually, I know poor people that shop here." Others echoed this response. A 59-year-old woman said, "I think you see more people who are financially comfortable here. But I know some very hard up people that just insist on coming here to get the quality of food." A 28-year-old male said, "people that are trying to live an organic lifestyle … do a lot of shopping here, so that could be your upper middle and upper class that, you know, the yuppie types that have the money, but they still want to at least act like they're doing the natural thing all the way to people who are very poor, but they still feel that they are big enough deal to do the natural thing."

I think some of these responses suggest a tension felt by the consumers, a tension in recognizing that the space was perhaps classed, but a recognition that was in opposition to their vision of what the market signified to them, which seemed to be an

inclusive space. First, these consumers seem on the one hand to assert that it is predominantly middle and upper-middle class people who shop at the farmer's market while on the other hand they seem uncomfortable with that assertion and thus resist it by noting that the market "isn't exclusive or anything" and that they "know poor people" who shop there. These responses sometimes felt a bit tacked on, a defense of the market and a defense of a system that they see as valuable and important, but perhaps flawed.

All but one of the consumers interviewed described the market in positive terms, and some almost seemed surprised by their answers that suggested class inequality existed in the market. I think in part the question itself was unsettling since it explicitly asked about race and class, categories that are often difficult to talk about, and categories that are often "unseen," particularly by those in positions of privilege. Thus, in noting that people who frequent the market may be upper or middle-class, it follows that the market is perhaps more welcoming to some kinds of people than others, a realization that is antithetical to notions of liberalism. This is not to say that all the consumers seemed unwilling to articulate inequality. The 26-year-old student who had noted that the market was predominantly white also included a discussion of class. She argued, "Unfortunately, I see a lot of middle, of upper middle class white people… I mean that's unfortunate, but that is mostly what I see." Her answer included level of critique that was not present in most other responses.

This response was the most critical of the market, but I was still surprised by the number of consumers who suggested that the market is perhaps marked as middle or upper middle class (although not necessarily in a restrictive way). I was particularly

interested in why the consumers were much more likely to discuss class rather than race or gender. I think it may be in part because class is somewhat less difficult to talk about than race and gender, but I also see it related to the market's handling of class inequality in the space; specifically, the market board has worked hard to be allowed to accept food stamps and WIC vouchers. In other words, the market itself acknowledges a certain level of class inequality in the space. While I discuss the onerous process of actually using the benefits in the Northwest Farmers' Market Chapter, the fact that many vendors display signs announcing that they accept these benefits is perhaps related to the consumers' responses about class equality at the market. Of course, the inverse may also be true: perhaps it was consumers' concerns about class inequality in the space that led to the implementation of these benefit programs here. If this is indeed the case, it is perhaps a hopeful sign that when "the market" (the board of directors or the market manager) puts in place systems to make the market more inclusive—in part to encourage a more diverse set of clientele, but also to improve the bottom line of the market—it may be reflected in how the consumers understand the space as well.

Despite the consumers who emphasized class in their responses, the most common response to my question was one that emphasized the market as an inclusive space where "everyone" was present. In fact, 20 of the consumers used what I refer to as "universalizing language" where these consumers noted that "everyone" shops at the market or that there is a "good mix" of people." A 41-year-old women who noted, "Everybody [shops here]; there is no color difference" is a typical example of this type of response.

I found these responses to be particularly interesting because of the ways these particular consumes avoided dealing with the categories that I explicitly included in the question. Instead of following the "everyone" up by explaining how that included people of various races, classes, genders or sexual orientations, most of the people who answered "everyone" went on to answer like this 59-year-old female consumer: "Everyone: young, old, middle-age, old you know everybody," or like this 35-year-old woman: "Everything, everyone, there are people in suits, people on their bikes, there is everyone, children, elderly, it's really well-rounded." These consumers tended to answer in a way that suggested that they did not actually see the market as racialized, gendered or classed in particular ways; rather they saw the market as an inclusive space that welcomed "everyone." Responses to the question that used universalizing language and saw the market as inclusive were by far the most common. This is perhaps not surprising given that the "Farmer's Market Coalition" (2007) itself asserted that "Farmer's Markets are Good For Everyone." These responses may reflect the dominant ideology within the sustainable food movement, which sees the movement as universally important and tends not to address how issues of inclusion, especially issues of race and gender inclusion, are specifically being attended to.

The varying responses I received to this question were particularly interesting. The responses included the student who noted, "Unfortunately, I see a lot of middle, of middle upper middle class white people" to the woman who felt that "Everything, everyone, there are people in suits, people on their bikes, there is everyone, children, elderly, it's really well-rounded." The fact that consumers tend to see the market in very

different ways likely reflects their own particular understanding of "inclusion"—for example, some people see any acknowledgement of race as "racist"—and thus may use universalizing language as a result. There were, however, some clear patterns in the responses. In general these responses suggest that while some consumers see the market as classed, but not necessarily in a way that actually restricts participation, the majority of consumers that I interviewed see the market as "good for everyone."

Why Doesn't Everyone Shop Here?

Many consumers saw the market as open to "everyone" and they described the market often quite glowingly. Thus when I asked the consumers "why doesn't everyone shop at the market?" it often posed a difficult question for many to answer given that they obviously chose to shop at the market and seemed to be enjoying the experience. The answers, however, were surprisingly similar; in fact, 27 consumer responses included a discussion of convenience, although the comments about convenience were often quite dissimilar. Some people talked about convenience in a rather neutral way, while others were empathetic in their discussion; another group condemned people who they felt placed convenience over shopping at the market. The second most common response was one that focused on "education"; in fact, nine consumers discussed education, although, again, the tone of these responses varied greatly. Beyond these categories there was very little consensus. Two consumers mentioned that the market was not well advertised and that people might not know about it. Three consumers briefly mentioned that the market was more expensive but largely focused other issues (such as

convenience) in their responses. In general, the responses fell either in the category of convenience or education, although two consumers included both categories in their responses.

Of the 27 consumers who mentioned convenience, 13 noted that it might not be convenient for everyone to shop at the market in a value neural way. For example, a 20-year-old female student noted, "Well, it usually happens once a week or maybe twice a week so it is more convenient to run out and buy stuff at the time you need it instead of planning ahead and it takes more planning." A 55-year-old woman noted, "it's not as convenient as the grocery stores, I think it's just easier to run in and get everything you need at once." During a very hot day, a very pregnant 33-year-old woman (with a young child in tow) suggested, "Probably, they just don't want to be walking around in the sun, it is more comfortable to have a car and drive your stuff and put it in there than be carrying all these bags." A 32-year-old woman noted, "It's probably a lack of ease, it takes a little bit more work to come down here and plan to shop three times a week." A 59-year-old woman argued, "Maybe it's not as convenient to come to town and park, that sort of thing." In fact, three consumers brought up the issue of parking. This issue of the market being somewhat inconvenient to access because of limited street parking, especially during the work week, was on the minds of a number consumers who were adamant that parking at the market was difficult.

These responses were coded as "neutral" because while consumers saw barriers to participation they were framed in ways that emphasize individual reasons one might not choose to participate rather than suggesting more structural reasons. For example, while

a number of consumers mentioned "parking" as a problem, it was not framed as a larger issue of access, though at times they seemed to be perhaps hinting at these structural issues. While the responses were framed in individual, rather structural ways, it is not difficult to see how in at least some of these responses the consumers were engaging structural ideas about access, but in more individualized terms.

Based on my observations, the issue of access was one of the clearest barriers to shopping at the market. For example, while I had a car and normally accessed the market that way, I once decided take the bus to the market during the weekend as part of my research. However, during this attempt to take the bus I learned that the bus I normally took to downtown left every half and hour during the weekend rather than every ten minutes. Thus, if you missed the bus, the wait was quite long, and it required some planning to know when to catch the weekend bus. Furthermore, during the weekend the bus does not actually stop at the corner where the market is set up because the hubbub of the market makes it too difficult for the bus to stop there. Instead, bus riders must get off a few blocks before or after the market. Thus, if one does not live somewhat close to the market so they can walk or ride a bike or if one does not have access to a car, getting to the market on the weekend in particular is a bit of a trial.

Furthermore, the buses, which are handicap accessible, are one of the primary means that people with disabilities are able to independently access the community. If one had a disability and relied on the bus for transportation, it would be nearly impossible to get there given that the bus changes stops to avoid the market during the weekends. However, if one was physically disabled or even physically very large, the market would

be exceptionally difficult to navigate anyway; it is crowded and the stalls are often quite narrow. During my observations I observed only one woman in a wheelchair who routinely shopped at the market, and she almost always had a younger woman who accompanied her and helped her gather the food. The market as it is laid out is clearly designed with an able body in mind.

Only two consumers mentioned ability as tied to market access. Both women's responses were in line with what I call an empathetic explanation for nonparticipation. In total there were five responses that rather than taking a "neutral" perspective seemed empathetic to the reasons it might not be convenient for everyone to shop at the market. One consumer, a 64-year-old woman, noted a number of reasons why some people might not shop at the market. Interestingly, she both begins and ends her response with "I don't know," despite giving what was perhaps the most thorough response I received. She noted,

> Well, I don't know, I see pretty good crowds here, but … I don't think you take food stamps here, if you could take food stamps here that would help tremendously. I think some people have trouble getting about you know whether they're in wheelchairs or whatever. Sometimes it is a time factor they go closest to home, I really, I really think and hope that they do quite well here. Perhaps parking is a problem, particularly if you had a lot of children. I don't know.

The only other consumer to mention ability was a 59-year-old who was on disability. She talked about her own struggle to get to the market. She used herself as an example,

noting "This year I haven't [been here as much] because it's too difficult to haul and I'm not supposed to lift… otherwise I would probably come down here more. When you have a basket at the store and then they are willing to put it in the car for you and then when you get home you can take it out one at a time I think that's probably [why]." Two other consumers framed their discussion of convenience in this way. A 58-year-old woman noted, "They don't have a reason to come downtown, I can see why they wouldn't shop here. If they are a younger family and have kids, it's too much of a hassle. I think you have to have a strong desire to have this kind of food." A 77-year-old woman had a similar comment; she noted, "I think probably finances maybe come into to it to a certain degree. If I was still raising my four children I would have to think twice about some of the things that I buy now, for myself." Interestingly, these two women were some of the very few consumers who mentioned children in their responses.

The responses that did include children, while limited, reflected what I observed at the market: consumers with children rarely had more than two in tow. Given the crowds at the market, it is difficult to navigate with children, particularly young and mobile children. Many of the people (almost exclusively mothers) who did have a child came during Tuesday or Thursday markets when they could use a stroller because the market was less crowded. Of course, this means that those parents were free from the demands of paid labor during Tuesdays or Thursdays. During the Saturday market when the crowds are sometimes difficult to navigate with a stroller, consumers tended to use a backpack or sling to carry a child their child through the market. Interestingly, on Saturdays, people who came with children were usually heterosexual couples and it was

quite common to see the father carrying the child while the woman did the marketing. While I am certainly not arguing that grocery shopping with multiple young children (or even one young child) at a grocery store is easy for a single parent, there are structures in place at a grocery store that make it more accessible than the farmers' market. For example, a parent shopping alone can bring a grocery cart directly to the car (which is parked in front of the store), then load and strap the children in, and then attempt to do her shopping. Simply getting to the market from a car or bus stop with multiple young children would be a very challenging task. Thus in some ways the success of the market (which often makes it very crowded) also means that a particular kind of family is better able to attend the market on the weekends, mostly mother/father dyads with one and occasionally two children.

A 24-year-old mother did not mention children in her responses but did note, "I think for some people maybe it's the hours, I'm on vacation this week, that's why I'm here, but most weeks, I have to sneak away and come, but I'm not off of work by 3:00 when it closes, so maybe that." This consumer noted that she was free from the demands of her job for long enough to participate. While in the clear minority, these five "empathetic" consumers seem to recognize structural limitations or barriers to coming to the market.

The five responses that I labeled "empathetic" were much clearer about non-participation likely being related to access or other issues. It is perhaps not surprising that the woman who was on disability and was not able to attend the market as much as she wanted articulated very clearly the different physical demands between going to a

grocery store and going to the farmers' market. It is interesting to note that of the five "empathetic" all were from women, four of whom were over age 50. Moreover, four of the women used their personal experiences to frame their responses. They all go to their current social location—two as women who no longer have to care for young children but who are empathetic to the demands of mothering, one who is on vacation from work and understands the flexibility it givers her, and one who is currently disabled—to frame their responses to the question about why people may not shop at the market.

On the other end of the spectrum, nine responses took a decidedly negative view of the reasons people may not shop at the market. These nine consumers framed their responses in way that suggested ideas about convenience, but these consumers did not see structural limitations to participation; they seemed to blame nonparticipants and see them as making poor personal choices for their own convenience. In fact a number of these consumers who used convenience in a negative way described nonparticipants as "lazy." For example, a 22-year-old man argued, "Because they would rather go to McDonald's. Something easier. They'd just like to be in their car, in the air-conditioning, drive up to McDonald's and buy some cheeseburgers. They wouldn't want to go into the fresh air. It's green, everything's looking great, great for you. Society these days, a lot of laziness has to do with a lot of things for people that want to come here but are too lazy to do it." Another young man said, "Sometimes they are too lazy to go, that maybe going to a regular store is easier, and it is easier, that they don't understand that its very important to support the people of [our town] and the farmers of [our town]; just laziness." A 63-year-old woman argued, "I think that it's a little bit more time consuming, it's less convenient

and it's probably not as quick. Some people are just more in a rush, they don't care what they eat as much, they eat out all the time, eat quick food or deli food, don't savor the food part of their life, they feel like they want to rush around and do too many things." A 53-year- old woman argued, "maybe fear and maybe a little bit of laziness, they like the ease of going to one place with their little shopping carts and paying at one place: that's the American way."

Not all consumers, however, used convenience (whether "neutral," "empathetic," or "negative") to explain why some consumers might not shop at the market. In fact, nine suggested the reason was that non-market consumers lacked the knowledge or education that would lead them to shop at the market. Five of these responses had a decidedly negative tone. One 35-year-old woman's response bridged the gap between convenience and education. She said, "I think they don't know, I think a lot of people don't know about it and I think it's laziness. We really shop at three different stores because we get different things from other places; a lot of people I talk to go to one store and get everything there, I think it's just people don't want to take the time." A 28-year-old woman noted, "They're just uneducated about really how important it is to have local and organic foods. I really think it's just not being educated about where it's at, what times it's at, and what's really there."

As noted, not all the responses about education took a negative tone, in fact the response from a 69-year-old woman, while at first mentioning issues of education ends up being a response perhaps best characterized in the "empathetic category." This woman notes, "I think those people who are more informed about nutrition and who take

the time [shop here]." She then adds, that the people who shop at the market "have time to cook, even some people who are quite well informed about nutrition have very busy lives and they can't come to a farmer's market in the middle of the day to gather the produce they need for the evening meal, that's just impossible, young families where both parents work, even though they want to give very nutritious food to their children, it's all they can do to prepare it themselves." Similar to the other women with empathetic responses, this woman's social location may have played an important role in her responses. During the course of the interview and our conversation afterward, she told me that she had to cancel her CSA subscription and was coming to the market more often. Her young granddaughter had cancer and she was traveling to her daughter's home to help care for her. She was sad she had to cancel her CSA subscription because she had been a longtime member, but she simply did not ever know what weeks she would be home and what weeks she would be with her granddaughter. Though this response was still framed around education as a reason people might not shop at the market, the woman also goes on to explain why even people who care deeply about the food they feed their families may not be able to participate in the system. Her response connects individual education and structural inequalities and is indicative of the ways that discussions about education can be included in responses without ignoring structural inequalities. In total there were four responses that included education that fell between neutral and empathetic.

The responses that pointed to a lack of education and that framed convenience negatively were particularly troubling to a vision of "social sustainability" and suggest

that these consumers saw those who were not shopping at the market in a negative light. Interestingly, it was often older women who framed their discussions about participation in empathetic ways and it was often the youngest consumers I interviewed—those in their twenties—who were the most likely to use the more troubling responses about education and convenience. Among the younger consumers, structural barriers to participation were infrequently acknowledged and instead the decision about where to shop was often framed as "individual" choice. I believe that these kinds of attitudes that focus so negatively on non-participants may create barriers to participation in part because a focus on the individual does not necessitate structural changes that may increase participation.

Ultimately, however, it may be that some of the consumers are simply in a difficult position to explain nonparticipation given that they are often going out of their way to participate. As the consumers often pointed out, the market can be difficult to access, even for them. It sometimes means sneaking away from work, fighting for parking, struggling to keep an unwilling toddler in a backpack, or feeling the pain of a disability, yet the politics of supporting the market mean making shopping here a priority. As a scholar, it is often easier to critique systems—such as consumers' particular beliefs about the market—than to see the complications in this mode of consumption. Clearly the consumers have other choices about how and what to consume, yet their responses suggest the ways that they prioritize shopping at the market. Furthermore, without the material support of the consumers there would be no market, no sustainable food movement. As Johnson (2008) is points out in her discussion of food politics, it is easy to point out the villains, but it can much harder to see the counter hegemonic mechanisms

consumers use in their food decisions. Simply, we should not ignore the agency or the progressive politics of shopping at the market.

What Is Sustainability?

In both the Introduction and Literature Review of this dissertation I discussed my personal struggle with defining "sustainability." While I have adopted Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell's (1997) definition with their emphasis on the "three legs of sustainability"—environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity—in conjunction with the Bruntland Commission's definition, particularly its emphasis on not compromising the needs of future generations as we go about meeting our current needs, the truth is it that it literally took me years of thinking about sustainable agriculture to settle on this definition. Thus when I asked the market consumers "what does sustainability mean to you?" I was not sure what kinds of responses I would get. Just the same, given my interest in how the consumers construct the space of the market and understand sustainable agriculture, I was interested in what components of sustainability were the most frequently emphasized by these consumers and how this idea of "sustainability" resonates with consumers.

There was certainly some confusion among a small number of consumers about how to define it. For example, a 33-year old woman struggled and then said, "Well, we have a good climate um I'm sure, I never really thought about it." I was somewhat surprised, however, given my own struggle defining sustainability, that only three

consumers had definitions that seemed very unclear, while an additional two consumers answered with "I don't really know." These five consumers were clearly in minority.

While a number of consumers struggled to articulate a definition, the vast majority of the consumers came up with a definition that included components that are emphasized in the most widely used definition. In fact 26 consumer definitions included an element that was "future looking." A 27-year-old woman's response is a good example of the ways consumers may have initially struggled with a definition, but ultimately went to a definition that included this idea that sustainably is future looking. This woman said, " Um, goodness, what a loaded question. Sustainable to me means, I'm not giving you a good answer, sustainable means um…That it has, that there's a longevity to it, that um, it's…it's something that will be able to last for awhile without having adverse affects." A 53-year-old woman noted simply, "Sustainable means that we might have something in years to come." Like this woman's, many of the future looking responses were quite succinct. A 45-year-old construction worker said, "Well, it means you'll be here tomorrow," and a 55-year-old chef said, "sustainability means lasting." These future looking definitions were clearly in line with the Brutland Commissions definition with its emphasis on future generations.

Many of these consumers who had a future looking definition also emphasized an environmental understanding. In fact, seven of the 26 future looking definitions included an environmental element. A 21-year-old man's definition, "It means providing for us, but with a focus on the next generation and keeping things stable and not exploiting the environment for our food or our next housing or anything. Just kind of keeping in mind

that we want the balance or having some for us now, with a focus on the next generation," is a clear example of this twin emphasis.

In total 15 consumers had definitions that emphasized the environment. A 51-year-old Judicial Assistant said, "I think it means it helps sustain the environment. It gives back, it doesn't harm the environment," while a 59-year-old woman said, "Sustainable, well, I guess treating the land with respect, and growing things that should grow in that place, at the time that they should grow and eating that same way, [for example] what is ripe at the time, available at the time. Mostly treating the land with respect and raising things organically, so we're not changing the chemistry of the soil." In general, many of these definitions were well developed and included specific elements about environmental sustainability—everything from mentioning rotational planting and eating seasonally to soil chemistry.

An emphasis on the environment and on the future comprised the vast majority of my responses. Two consumers' definitions included discussion of sustainability being related to "the local," three mentioned that it was related to "self-sufficiency," and two mentioned "personal health" in their definitions. Four consumers mentioned conservation in their definitions, an understanding I found particularly interesting after an interview with a farmer who stressed that sustainability was largely meaningless to him because it allowed the discussion to be about consuming resources "sustainably" rather than conserving those resources. This farmer saw this an important ideological distinction. This idea that sustainability was "meaningless" or watered-down was much more pronounced among the farmers; in fact, only one consumer, a 32-year-old man

included this idea (along with an environmental emphasis). He noted, "At this point, I mean it's funny because this word is so diluted, I'm in architecture, everything we do is unsustainable, so when they talk about sustainable designs, so I sort of go back to the work and try to do something that can be continued and try not to foul, especially with food, our water, and our soil."

Given the emphasis on social sustainability in this project, I was particularity interested in whether any consumers would include a discussion of social sustainability in their definition. Ultimately, only two consumers included elements that might be considered "socially sustainable." Even these definitions however, are somewhat vague. A 41-year-old woman emphasized a "quality of life" in her definition. She said, "In three sentences or less, promoting safe and healthy food, mental health practices, enjoyment, reaching a quality of life that we deserve to have." A 26-year-old woman included the idea of the "community" in her definition. She said, "Sustainable means continuing living in a way, living in away where we can continue to live that way, meaning not putting undo stress on resources or people or fossil fuels sustainable basically means living in a balance with your environment and your community." Though both of these definitions seem to include an element of social sustainability, they are not as well developed as the discussions of the environment. Specifically, it is somewhat difficult to know what these women might mean include when they say "your community" and "a quality of life we deserve to have."

Ultimately, I was not surprised that so few consumers included any discussion of social sustainability in their project. The idea of social sustainability is rarely

emphasized; if one goes to the Northwest Farmers' Market website, they might notice the mission statement which includes an element of social sustainability, and if one searches definitions of sustainability on the Internet they will likely find these discussions. However, the idea of social sustainability, particularly an emphasis on social equality, is simply not visible at the market in the ways the environmental elements are. For example, the farmers emphasize that their farms are "all organic" or "bio-dynamic" and have compost buckets at the market that are labeled "organic only." However, except for signs that suggest the farms are "family" farms, no one announces with pride the working conditions on their farms; there are no signs that announce: "our employees have health insurance!"

Furthermore, though the Northwest Market Handbook is clear to point out the requirements for labeling food at the market, the requirements are all tied to environmental regulations about how the food is grown. There are no rules about the working conditions on the farms or any other element that might fall under the guise of "social sustainability." Thus, while the Northwest Market includes elements of social sustainability in the mission statement, on a practical level how and if to implement "social sustainability" is up to each individual farmer and is not regulated. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the consumers' definitions of sustainability tend to be future looking and focused on the environment rather than including elements that might fall under the definition of social sustainability. I think this emphasis on elements of sustainability other than the social elements are particularly apparent given that this question about "sustainability" was the last question I asked (before the demographic

question). The consumers were finishing ten minute interviews where they had just been asked questions about the working conditions for farm workers on the farmers and asked about who shops at the market and why. Ultimately, these consumers had just spent ten minutes talking about people and farmers' markets, yet when asked to define sustainability only two consumers mentioned anything related to the social element of sustainability.

Conclusion

Based on my interviews with consumers, it seems safe to say that most would agree that the market plays a valuable role in the community, not only in terms of providing food, but also the ways it provides a space for sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, these consumers are a key to the success of sustainable agriculture. Whatever their personal allegiance to the moment might be, the market and sustainable agriculture more broadly simply would not exist without their support. This is what makes the consumers' perspective on the market so important. Through their participation they are helping to shape the market, and based on their perspectives of what is important, I see them as a key to helping make the market to be more "socially sustainable."

Of course, much of what the consumers seem to see is a vision of sustainable agriculture that is the most widely circulated by the culture at large. For example, based on the interviews it was clear that most of the consumers saw the market as an inclusive space where "everyone" was welcome to shop. In general the consumers' responses were

interesting in the ways that they reflect a particular ideology about sustainable agriculture. For example, these interviews suggest that consumers along with groups like the Farmer's Market Collation see sustainable agriculture as "good for everyone" without critically questioning what that might actually mean.

If we believe sustainable agriculture is important and has the potential to change our relationships—not only to farming but also to our communities—then it is essential that we find ways of making the market more socially sustainable and equitable. This poses an important challenge for sustainable agriculture and for this market. The framing of the consumers responses suggest important first steps. First, the market needs to make a commitment to social sustainability in the same way they have made a commitment to environmental sustainability. The consumers' definitions of sustainability tended to be quite thoughtful and developed, yet, it is also clear that the idea of "social sustainability" is one that many consumers are not familiar with nor it is an idea that they immediately connect with the setting of the farmers' market. The relationship between healthy environmental practices and healthy social practices needs to be more visible. Perhaps this means the market board develops "definitions" for social sustainability such as "using sustainable labor practices" which vendors can use to promote their farms at the market. It means a focus on topics that are tied to social inclusion and making them visible at the market. The fact that consumers talked about class and then often brought that issue back to a discussion of food stamps and WIC suggests a relationship between implementing this program at the market and awareness about class inequality in this space. This program is far from perfect, but visibility of this social issue is brought into

the public consciousness at the market because of the signs that announce: "food stamps accepted here."

Furthermore, although the tone of the responses varied greatly, discussions about why some members of the community were participating in the market rarely included structural explanation. Rather, most consumers said that it was not convenient for some people to shop at the market without unpacking how someone's social location is related to that convenience. Much more troubling, although less common, were responses that blamed the individual and suggested that personal failings such as "laziness" were to blame for nonparticipation. In part this is likely tied to much larger issues about the way the American culture tends to blame the individual rather than examining the social structures to explain social location.

I see the project of social sustainability within sustainable agriculture to be extraordinarily important, yet based on my interviews with consumers, it seems that this part of sustainable agriculture gets little attention. It is perhaps not surprising: this is a difficult project. Ultimately, we are asking sustainable agriculture to create a space of inclusion and equality, but this is something that very few (if any) institutions in our society are able to do effectively. Just the same, without this goal and consciousness about social sustainability, sustainable agriculture will end up as a system that simply reproduces the social injustices of conventional agriculture behind the veneer of beautiful food.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This project began by asking how the ideals of social sustainability are put into practice by consumers and farmers of sustainable food in a society where social injustices are often embedded on both a structural and individual level. Throughout this project I have attempted to answer this question by examining the Northwest Farmers' Market and the actors—both farmers and consumers—who participate and construct this system.

On the most basic level, based on my interactions with farmers and consumers I was struck by their commitment to this agricultural system. The farmers in particular were often making choices to farm that came with what seemed like personal sacrifices (particularly in a society that often measures success and happiness by material possessions). Thus if they were not farming, many of them likely would have had nicer homes or fancier clothes. It seemed clear, however, that ultimately they were presently content with the choices they were making. Most if not all of the farmers were very happy with the lives they were making because they realized the costs both in terms of personal well being (many of the farmers had left high pressure lives to begin farming) and the environmental degradation that came with affluence. Thus the farmers were participating in this system because of what was mostly a concern with creating a more

environmentally and socially just food system and saw they "sacrifices" they were making as less than the overall benefits both to themselves and the society at large.

The consumers' motivations for participating at the farmers' market were more mixed. In general, consumers seemed concerned with supporting local farms and the market but also espoused a concern about their health as a factor motivating their participation. Generally, consumers did not seem to see their participation as requiring a sacrifice, although when discussing why some people might not participate at the market some consumers did mention the work they went to get to the market to demonstrate the not only feasibility of the shopping there but also that sometimes shopping there did require sacrifices, sacrifices they were willing to make. Most of the consumers believed that the food at the market was the best quality available and also enjoyed the experience of shopping there. The importance of personal enjoyment to shopping at the market was always clear on cold, rainy summer days when the number of people at the market shrunk drastically. For some consumers, the market was important, and they believed in supporting it, but there were limits to that support. Of course, without the support of the consumers—even those who only come on sunny days—there simply would be no sustainable food movement. Ultimately, without their willingness to support the market, regardless of their varying motivations, the sustainable food movement would grind to a halt. The importance and the commitment of consumers to the movement cannot be overstated.

Of course, despite the often counter-culture feel of the market, it is a space that is clearly part of the capitalist system. Though both the farmers and the consumers see this

space as an alternative to conventional agriculture and conventional grocery stores (and it clearly is), it still is a space where the farmers are trying to make a living and the consumers are trying to get the best value for their money (value that is measured in terms of quality of the food, which they see as worth a premium price). The farmers are literally invested in making as much as they can for the food they are producing, and this interest is often antithetical to values of social sustainability. Ultimately, the only ways to charge a premium for your product was to be the first one to have it. The first farms to have strawberries or tomatoes always sold out of these products quickly, despite the price, and I overheard conversations between farmers each trying to get the other to share when that farm would bring tomatoes to market. It was not uncommon to see farmers casually strolling the market and looking at competitor's prices and products. I was always amazed by how little variation there was in the price of the food.

Personally, I found the food at the market expensive. Lev, an economics professor at Oregon State who specializes in direct farm marketing, points out "solid data about relative costs of local and nonlocal food purchases don't exist yet" (quoted in Cole 2009). Just the same, there are numerous newspaper articles that compare the prices of individual food items at farmer's markets with grocery store produce with a goal of explaining how the food is or is not affordable to average consumers; the findings in these articles tend to differ. For example Cole at *The Oregonian* (2009) found farmers' market food was more expensive, but only slightly more so than New Seasons Grocery, an upscale local Northwest Chain, but 30% higher than WinCo, a large discount store. However, in Gaudette's (2007) article for the *Seattle Times*, she concludes that farmers'

market food is no more expensive than food from a grocery store but uses Whole Foods—an upscale, and very expensive grocery store—as her point of comparison.

Throughout my research I was struck by the difficulty of putting a concept like "social sustainability" into practice. Ultimately, the farmers and consumers exist within a system where inequality is deeply structured. The farmers need to sell their food at a premium if they are going to pay themselves anything for their labor. Yet, because of the high price of land and the limited subsidies for small scale, sustainable farms, the food at the market was often much more expensive than discount grocery stores, despite desires on the part of the farms to make the food available to the community at large. These elements led to a particular class of consumer being privileged in this space. These same elements lead to farmers who typically come from a particular social location, often one of privilege. Moreover, gendered inequalities, though less than those I observed in conventional agriculture, meant that the female farmers I observed and interviewed often were able to farm because of their relationship to their husband. Both the women and the men I interviewed often felt that a "woman's perspective" was an asset in sustainable farming and seemed to genuinely appreciate and see women's labor as essential, yet clearly barriers to women's farm ownership are part of a much larger issue about women's earning and wealth. These same structural barriers are also clearly at work in why so few people of color own farms, sustainable or not. These barriers to farm ownership are particularly salient given the amount of farm labor that is done by Hispanic men and women in the Northwest.

Yet, because of the ways that privilege is often unmarked, privilege in this space of the market is often invisible. Thus it is not surprising that the majority of the consumers see the market as a place where "everyone" shops. It is not surprising that very few consumers pointed to structural barriers to participation in their discussions about why some people might not shop at the market. This privileging is also marked in the ways the white, heterosexual family is used to signify the wholesomeness of sustainable food and farms. The farmers who develop the marketing for their farms and the market mangers and others who develop the marketing for the market or the "Pick-a-Farmer" event certainly did not invent this link; the white, heterosexual family is used to sell everything from political candidates to minivans. Yet the consequences mean that a particular family, one that is idealized throughout the culture, becomes the ideal in this space as well. This is particularly frustrating because both consumers and farmers want the market to be an open, inclusive space. The farmers often fret over how to price the food to make it available to the community, and I think the consumers may see "everyone" at the market because of an abiding belief in inclusion.

I am struck as I finish this project by questions that have plagued me since I began my research. There are two primary questions that I am left with as I finish this project. The first question is: what is sustainable agriculture? Despite all the work that I have done on this project I still am grappling with that question (as are many of the farmers and consumers that I interviewed). I find myself grappling with what "social sustainability" would look like in practice and why it seems to get so little attention from those within the movement. I suppose like many scholars and activists alike, I am willing

to use the definition devised by the Bruntland Commission, in which they define sustainability to mean "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" ((1987:8). Yet I am struck by Zeb's comment during our interview: "I gotta tell you, organic farming, I believe in it, and it's better for the land, but any farming is hard on the land and certainly there's nothing remotely natural about it. Let's face it, from an ecological standpoint, farming is a disaster." I find myself fumbling for a definition that manages to incorporate these two seemingly incompatible definitions of sustainable agriculture and left wondering how to make social sustainability a bigger part of the conversation.

Part of the reason that I am left fumbling for a definition is because of another question that remains as I finish this project. I am left wondering: who gets to decide what "sustainable agriculture" is and is not? Julie Guthman's (2007) book, *Agrarian Dreams*, addresses this question in a peripheral way. She explores the corporatization of the "organic" agriculture. The truth is that many organic products are now produced within an essentially industrialized system, albeit one that trucks in organic chicken manure rather than petroleum-based fertilizer. This system is arguably better for the environment, but it does very little to change the agricultural system as a whole. It is a system that is still controlled by the same multinational corporations and that still uses exploitive labor practices that target Hispanic families particularly cruelly (for example, the organic industry's lobbying of the California legislature to allow the use of the short-handled hoe). The USDA first officially defined what organic is, and since then large corporations have used that definition to squeeze their way into the organic market.

Furthermore, these same corporations are now working to water down the environmental protections that the organic label has come to represent. In contrast, there are strict regulations at the Northwest market about what it takes to determine if a product is "organic" or "all natural." For example, to be considered "organic," food must go through a yearly verification process, develop a "farm plan" which addresses "strategies and technologies for long-term improvement of the soil," and have the soil and plant tissues tested for pesticides. In addition there are protocol that allow other farmers to "challenge" another farmer's food. Yet, these regulations tell us nothing about the social relations that went into producing that food.

Just the same, nearly everything I saw during my farm tours gave me hope for a grassroots alternative to this form of industrial organic. The "sustainable" farmers that I observed showed a deep, personal concern for practicing a holistic, vigilant kind of farming. It often seemed that every decision was one that weighed heavy on the farmers I interviewed. I want to be clear, then, that there are alternatives to both "industrial organic" and "industrial" agriculture. These farmers, though sometimes using different techniques and visions, are providing clear alternatives.

Despite this, the question of who gets to decide what is sustainable continues to plague me. The reason is straight forward enough. With the power to define what "sustainable" agriculture is comes the power to co-opt this system in the same way that the "organic" label has been co-opted. For example, a number of the farmers I interviewed were running "organic" farms, but had become so frustrated by the co-optation of this label that they refused to use the label and often quit complying with the

certification process. Without a clear definition of "sustainable" it becomes the responsibility of both the consumer and the farmer to decide what a sustainable agriculture should look like and then to act on this definition. At times I find this idea important and refreshing. Without a clear "definition" of sustainability it means the farmer must continue to strive to make his/her farm able to meet his or her own sometimes nebulous definition of sustainability. It also requires the consumer do the same thing. And then, perhaps most importantly, it requires the consumer and farmer come together to form some kind of relationship where they are able to merge these ideas.

My second year observing at the "Pick-A-Farmer" event, I had the pleasure of watching this process in action. Four close friends of mine decided they wanted to join a CSA and they came to the event looking to "Pick-A-Farmer." These two couples had decided the values that were the most important to them (as well as the price they were able to pay) and went around looking for the perfect CSA. They narrowed the list to four farms and then continued to grapple with the decision for many more days, researching the farms on websites and discussing and re-discussing the merits of each farm. In fact, they even asked me for my input on the farms since I had visited many of them. Although I tried to remain somewhat impartial, I found myself steering them towards the smallest farms since I found those farms were the ones that best fit my own vision of sustainable agriculture; I often found their labor practices to be the least exploitive (although, frankly, it often meant these farmers were simply exploiting their own labor and bodies). A month after choosing their CSA my friends received an email from their

farm that stated a hailstorm had decimated their spring crop and they would likely be delivering very little spring produce. So I found myself grappling with the advice I had given; I knew my friends had invested a lot of money in their CSA choice and the larger farms seemed to have escaped much of the devastation of this particular hailstorm. Maybe these larger farms were better prepared by having the crops covered in hoop houses or simply located in a more protected areas—I just don't know. Just the same, I found myself again grappling with the advice I had given and the reason I had given it. Maybe the larger farms are a better choice because they have more experience and history to provide a more stable food supply.

Thus, while the idea of consumers coming together with farmers to decide what they value and then acting on those values seems like a good idea, I still grapple with the ways this individualizes the problems in the food system in this country. If it takes four highly educated people who have access to a researcher who has visited many of the farms a week to chose a CSA, it strikes me that this solution privileges a particular kind of consumer. Essentially, I want a food system where one cannot make a "bad" choice (although I think the Pick-A-Farmer event comes close to this). I think that to create these kinds of choices, the food system needs to be changed in a structural way that requires large-scale interventions, interventions that are as concerned with the health of the consumer as the health of those producing the food.

Throughout this project I found myself coming back to asking whether or not this farmers' market system is a solution to the unequal access to food in this country. Unfortunately, at this point I tend to see the market system as a way for educated and

middle and upper-middle class people to opt out of industrial food system without actually changing this food system. Based on my research, I worry that the sustainable food movement may be a way for a particular kind of consumer to avoid consuming industrially produced food without actually challenging the larger food system. Of course, I am certainly sympathetic to the argument that change must start somewhere and that this may become the beginning of a consumer led revolt. Perhaps these consumers, despite their relative privilege (or perhaps because of it) are at the forefront of creating a revolutionary new food system. Based on my interviews with consumers it seems that for many of them their visions for the market and sustainable agricultural rarely include elements of social justice. For example, many of the consumers see participation at the market as a personal choice and rarely discuss the structural barriers that may lead to unequal access. Yet despite this, their commitment to this alternative food system and the importance of their presence to this movement should not be minimized.

The contradictions between the ideal and the reality exist at all levels of this food system. For example, the farmers, while often committed to issues of food equity, are also invested in selling their food and making at least enough money to continue doing what they are doing. This means sometimes plowing under perfectly good food and disposing of food that is not prime quality by either composing it or feeding it livestock in order to keep prices stable. This may arguably be a reasonable way of "using" the food, but I would feel better if that food were feeding people. And I would guess that Phil, who runs the Food Bank Farm, would agree with this sentiment. Ultimately, when the food is disposed of in this way and for this reason, it simply does not challenge the

mindset of industrial agricultural, which ultimately puts profits above all else. Of course, I would imagine the farmers would argue what other choice do they have if they want to continue farming? They cannot give their food away.

After talking about my project with various people, they've asked me if I was going to share it with the sustainable agriculture community when I finished with the hope that perhaps this project would help address some of the places where sustainable agriculture seems inequitable. I am certainly not opposed to doing that and have planned on sharing the project with a number of farmers I interviewed who asked to read it. But as I think more about how to help shift sustainable agriculture in a way that allows it to meet its own values of social justice and social sustainability, I wonder who the correct audience for this kind of plea is. Typically, when I am asked if I am going to share it, it is assumed that I should share it with the farmers. While the farmers are typically deeply committed to the goals of sustainable agriculture, they also have a profit motive, or even a survival motive, for keeping the market system mostly unchanged.

As someone invested in the idea of public sociology and who would ultimately like to see this project as offering some kind positive change, I also find that sharing this with the farmers and expecting some kind of real change is unfair to those farmers. During my work it often felt like the farmers were bearing the burden of changing this food system. Ultimately, I believe that real change in the food system needs to come from a structural level. In the industrial food system producers of crops like corn rely on government subsidies. This corn typically becomes animal fodder, corn syrup and corn meal filler which appears in nearly every piece of processed food. Activists and scholars

alike have pointed to these subsidies as one of the root causes of our broken food system (Pollan 2007; Pyle 2005). These subsidies mean that particular kinds of foods (like corn) become so cheap that they become omnipresent in our diets, fillers that offer little nutritional benefit. Importantly, every dollar that goes to subsidizing industrially produced monocrops like corn, means a dollar that is not going to subsidize other kinds of foods. Furthermore, it means that the food system is weighted in a way that makes foods like cornmeal and corn syrup artificially cheap.

Thus, based on my research, it seems that if we want sustainably grown, local food to be affordable and available to "everyone," then these are the kinds of farms and foods that should be subsidized or at the very least the subsidies to industrially grown foods like corn need to be reconsidered. Of course, I recognize the scope of this suggestion and the political battle involved in this kind of suggestion. But if we are truly invested in changing the food system it must change on a structural level. It remains to be seen what the issues will be that make us reconsider these food subsidies. Obesity levels in the US, particularly among children, have risen to the level of moral panic. I recently read a newspaper article which concluded that a full 1/3 of teenagers are unable to join the military because they are simply too fat (Brown 2009). Perhaps it is the cynic in me that could not help but wonder if the military industrial complex might be the only thing in this country powerful enough to change the industrial food system.

As I suggest above, I think another level of social change that those involved in the sustainable agriculture movement need to consider is who gets to decide what is in fact sustainable food. At first this perhaps seems like a simple questions, but throughout

my work at the market I was struck by the ways that those involved in the market—the consumers, the farmers, and the market managers—ultimately decided what was sustainable food. I found it ironic that many of the practices from the conventional ranch I grew up on appeared here as "sustainable" food. For example, there was a large push for food preservation like canning and gardening. Growing up we picked wild berries, wild horseradish and had a large garden. We spent the fall "putting up" foods and took a great deal of pride in the perfectly canned foods that lined the shelves in our basement. Yet, in the time and place where I grew up this was considered at best an "old fashioned" thing to do, and at worst things "poor" people did that caused you to die of botulism. It seems a bit ironic now that my hip farmers' market shopping friends are asking me to teach them how to can.

I also grew up in a family of hunters; given that we had a cattle ranch we did not eat as much venison as some people, but we had more than our share of "elk loaf." Frankly, I always found hunting to be cruel and a little tacky; let's just say I was not the kid who brought elk jerky to school in my lunch box. So I was surprised when Michael Pollan devoted an entire chapter of the bestselling book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* to hunting feral boars. Far from an activity that seemed best immortalized on the side of a box of Hamm's beer, Pollan made hunting seem kind of cool as well as good for the planet (if still highly masculinized). In the same way I tried to think about those boiling hot days in the kitchen canning food as something hip and "sustainable," I tried to think about my brother and dad as falling inside a definition of sustainable food as they hauled a dead deer out of the back of their pickup truck. I realized how much of what is

sustainable is tied to the power to define what you are doing as sustainable. The truth is I am still not sure if hunting is a sustainable practice, and part of that is clearly because I find it difficult imagining my brother and dad anywhere near the Northwest Farmers' Market. I can image them complaining that they didn't know "what the heck kinds of foods them guys are trying to sell."

I think, then, that one of the main hurdles to creating a more sustainable and socially just food system is creating a space where everyone is at the table. I think that conventional farmers probably would have a lot to add to discussions about sustainable agriculture, but based on my interviews with both conventional and sustainable farmers, there is simply no dialogue between the two camps. I think we need to see sustainable agriculture in a more open way, in a way that conventional farmers may see room in the movement for them. I am not suggesting that we water down what it means to produce sustainable food but recognize that these kinds of labels may actually be too reductive. In fact, many of the "conventional" farmers that I talked to in my previous research used practices that would clearly fit within the sustainable paradigm. I see one of the main issues with involving conventional farmers in the movement is a lack of the kind of cultural capital that would allow them to market their foods effectively. My brother essentially raises pastured, grass-fed cattle, but sells the cattle for a pittance because he does not think anyone would actually buy the beef like that; of course, in the particular market he is in, he may be right.

Furthermore, I do not think people should be faulted for wanting cheap food. During the course of my research I often heard consumers and producers lamenting all

the cheap food. They make two conclusions about this cheap food. The first is that the food is artificially cheap because it does not take into account external costs of production—for example, the costs of polluted water and rising temperatures are not reflected in the food. Furthermore, I have heard the argument that the real cost of eating cheap food comes in the costs of medical bills. Finally, farmers and consumers at the market both mentioned that the artificially cheap prices at conventional grocery stores give consumers sticker shock when they get to the market so that cheap food undermines the project of sustainable agriculture. I think all these arguments are correct in their assessments; nonetheless, the fact remains that Oregon is one of the hungriest and most food insecure states in the country. Even with all this cheap food, there are many thousands of people in this state who cannot afford to buy it. What will happen if we ask people to bear the "true cost of cheap food?" I think the truth is we will have many, many more hungry people. This is a frustrating conclusion for me to come to, but it is one we cannot ignore as we try to change the food system. We live in a country and a world where access to food is radically unequal. Of course, part of the reasons that people cannot afford to bear the "true costs" of food is related in particular to rising healthcare and housing costs. Just the same, paying the true costs of food will not lower these other costs of living.

I think one of the first steps to creating a market with a more economically diverse set of consumers means that there needs to be an acknowledgement that buying at many farmers' markets is more expensive than a conventional grocery store. It is simply disingenuous to compare the prices at a farmers' market to the prices at high-end grocery

stores and say that shopping at a farmers' market is not more expensive than a grocery store, which, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, is the most common way that prices are compared. People who are buying groceries on a budget are not shopping at high-end grocery stores. Until farmers and consumers acknowledge this, it seems impossible to make any real change to make markets more accessible for poor and working-class shoppers. For many years my partner and I lived on a grocery budget of $37.50 a week for the two of us. This is how much we received in food stamp benefits and we could not afford to spend more than our allotment. This kind of budget simply does not allow for any wiggle room to buy food that is even a little more expensive. And I would imagine that we were a fairly typical of the average American consumer. Of course, part of what allowed us to live relatively well on this budget was growing a garden—something that requires access to ground, and knowing it was temporary and that when we were no longer students we would eat better (and we do). As I have suggested elsewhere in this dissertation the issue of who has access to land is a major hurdle in creating a more social just sustainable food movement. If only educated, white, heterosexuals are able to access to land in order to produce sustainable food, it should not surprise us if the people buying the food end up looking like those growing it.

I am not sure if it is because of the conclusions of this project or in spite of them that I find myself more committed to issues of access to sustainable food than ever before. I wonder what a truly integrated sustainable food system would look like. How do we address the fact that the ability to shop for and then prepare sustainable food requires someone's labor and time and means that someone in the family (usually a

woman) is expected to bear this additional labor? Can we accept the claim that farmers' markets are "good for everyone" without also buying into destructive ideas about living in a country that is "colorblind" and where everyone is middle-class? How do we integrate the reality that we live in a country that is stratified by race, class, gender, and sexual orientation into farmers' markets and sustainable agriculture? I am even left wondering if the market system is best way to distribute food when I see the number of people that Phil is able to feed on his relatively small nonprofit farm. Mostly I wonder what a truly integrated farmers' market would look like and sound like.

But what I do know is that we have to start somewhere. These questions keep me invested in this project. If sustainable agriculture is as important as we have been led to believe—and I think it is—then the work is in finding answers to these questions and trying new approaches to making this food accessible. To me, the beauty of the sustainable food movement is that its history is still being written. I have seen first hand the ways that the industrial agricultural system has broken the people that believed in it the most. I see sustainable agriculture as offering real promise for changing this broken food system, but an important part of this promise is working to make the goals for social justice and social sustainability more visible, and then working to make them realities.

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