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BRIDGING GAPS, BUILDING SOLIDARITY: THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS TO BUILD INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY AROUND LOCAL FOOD  
SYSTEMS

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(Sociology)

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University of Maine

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## ABSTRACT

Real innovation for a more sustainable and inclusive food system requires collaboration based on resilient relationships between a diverse range of community partners and across socio-economic boundaries. SNAP incentive programs at farmer's markets are bridging gaps in food access and sovereignty for thousands of individuals across the country, but what are the far reaching implications of these programs in terms of a sustainable food system, especially in an uncertain economic landscape? Using the findings of a quantitative, interdisciplinary and community inclusive research project of the Community Supported Farmers' Markets (CSFM), a SNAP incentive program organized by Food and Medicine in Brewer, Maine, this study will explore the role of solidarity between SNAP participants and market vendors as a means of not only gauging the sort of relationship that is being formed between the program's stakeholders, but also of exploring the implications solidarity has for building community around local food. Is the incentive purely economic, or is this program fostering community ties that can persist through fiscal changes and allow for the collaborative progression of the local food economy? Drawing from a rich literature of the solidarity economy and social capital, this study demonstrates the important role social relationships can play in supporting SNAP incentive programs as the survey results indicate social capital exists between the market vendors and CSFM participants. Though complications with these findings will be discussed, the data highlight important findings that illustrate the importance of market and nonmarket factors that influence and construct people's food choices.

To all the amazing people of Food and Medicine and everyone else,  
including my advisors, who work to build better food systems here  
in the great state of Maine

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

There are few things in this life more essential and more basic than a person's relationship with food. And yet this most essential sacrament has become one of the most heated political topics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, echoing across the country from Main Street to Wall Street, town halls to the halls of Congress. More than ever, people are examining their relationship with food and are asking questions of vital importance for the future of our societies and our planet. Where is this food coming from? How is it produced? Who has access to what food and why? These questions start with the personal grocery list but must be answered by delving into the structural and institutional bodies that shape, restrain, and funnel our food from the fields to our plates. These questions have led to a food movement with sweeping implications that could forever change the face of agriculture in this country and around the world.

The "local food movement" is a broad term, incorporating numerous facets that challenge the status quo within the food system as well as create alternative food pathways and relationships. Historically, food production and farming was deeply rooted in household and community economics without much formal, overlying structure other than social relationships. The rise of capitalism and the push for higher profits through standardized, maximum efficiency procedures, these local economies were swept away by the imposing and rationalized industrial agriculture, completely changing the means by which food was produced, exchanged, and consumed (Lyson, 2004).

Despite the revolutionary and well-meaning intentions of this blossoming food movement, critical voices have raised concerns about who is able to access this healthier, locally produced food. According to the USDA (United States Department of

Agriculture) Economic Research Services, 14.5% of U.S. households were food insecure in 2012. The USDA defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services, 2013), implying that food insecurity would be lacking the previous described access. Most simply, food insecurity means not knowing where your next meal will come from.

In our own state, 15.7% of Maine households were food insecure in 2011, a 50% increase since 2005 and the highest in New England (Good Shepard Food Bank, 2011). According to Good Sheppard Food Bank, the largest hunger relief agency in the state, 40% of those they serve are children and 40% of their clients report having to choose between food and medical expenses. In every state across the nation, the issue of who is able to meet the above definition of food security is a glaring obstacle to promoting the local food movement ideals of locally sourced and healthy food. Even with Supplemental Nutrition Program Assistance (SNAP) funds, formally known as food stamps, for those who qualify, the use of these funds are limited to which venues will even accept SNAP and the stigma that comes from relying on government assistance (Maryns, 2008). Additionally, agencies that address issues of food insecurity and hunger are often more concerned with just getting food on the community member’s tables or the food pantry shelves and are frequently not particularly concerned with where that food is coming from or how it was produced (Ramde, 2011; Hart, 2013). Even when agencies do attempt to provide healthy and local food for patrons, issues of education on food nutrition and preparation arise in addition to concerns regarding cost and convenience (Stott, 2011).

So what is being done about these gaps and inequalities? How can local food systems be constructed inclusively and equitably in a sustainable way? One such means of addressing food insecurity, while simultaneously addressing issues of unequal food access, is through SNAP incentive programs at farmers' markets. These programs vary in structure and logistics across the country, but in general, they provide a discount to patrons who use their SNAP benefits at participating farmers' markets, helping to stretch food budgets further and encouraging low income populations to explore local food who may not be able to otherwise (Briggs et al., 2010). One such program is organized by Food and Medicine, a non-profit in Brewer, Maine whose mission emphasizes the need to organize and build solidarity in communities between union workers, farmers, and others to fight for social and economic justice. Their program, Community Supported Farmer's Markets (CSFM), provided a discount, 50% during the 2013 season, to SNAP customers at three farmers' markets in Maine: Bangor, Brewer, and Ohio Street. Recently, questions have been raised from both the farmers and from within the organization itself regarding the direction and sustainability of this program. What is the program accomplishing? Does it connect to the larger mission of Food and Medicine as an organization regarding community and solidarity? What is the discount incentivizing? Is it purely fiscal return for vendors and consumers, or is the program helping to build a community around local food with broader economic consequences?

The food movement is a subset of a larger demand for more community centered and locally based economies to replace neoliberal, market driven policies that raise ecological and humanitarian concerns (Allard & Matthaei, 2010). These economies emphasize social relationships, community development, and personal well-being,

principles that are often undervalued or ignored in many neo-liberal capitalist enterprises that are driven by the bottom line. Following in this tradition, the solidarity economy is an economic model that addresses the demands for more community centered economies through cooperative structures based on social connection and socially embedded economic relationships like what was seen in pre-Industrial Revolution agricultural economies. Recognizing the importance of active and vibrant social networks and solidarity that fuels collective action, enterprises and organizations that follow a solidarity economy model work towards a social goal meaningful to the stakeholders in a way that allows for the pluralist needs and resources of the community in which it is operating (Miller, 2010; Alard & Davidson, 2008).

This study will use this model of the solidarity economy to evaluate Food and Medicine's CSFM program, looking for indicators of social capital as a studied measure (Bullen & Onyx, 1998) that is reflected in the solidarity economy to determine if a community is being built in the wake of the monetary transactions. Is this program functioning along the lines of Food and Medicine's missions; to build solidarity and community among working class people? The indicators of social capital that will be used are as follows: voluntary and active participation; reciprocity and mutuality; loyalty and connection to farmers or costumers; inclusion in program and in broader local food movement; and social relationships between the vendors and consumers. To do this, the study will focus specifically on the importance of the SNAP discount as an economic incentive within the CSFM program. Offering a discount on the cost of total purchases is a means of attracting people to the farmers' markets based purely on economics; people receive a monetary discount. It is a market based approach, but it has the potential to

extend beyond that into the realm of solidarity and community by mitigating the social relationships between the vendors and the SNAP customers. Thus, this study will explore the extent to which the incentive has helped make that transition from a purely economic based transaction to one based more on solidarity and social relationships

Solidarity is a key component to the Food and Medicine mission statement and as an organization, the non-profit views the presence of community as a prerequisite for the sustainability of the program moving forward. This study will identify the presence of that community for Food and Medicine and discuss action that can be taken by Food and Medicine and future researchers to further understand and cultivate this community. Looking at the role of solidarity in this specific SNAP incentive program may provide additional insights into how the solidarity economy model can be used to help build more equitable and accessible food systems, sustained by community and the ideals of a more socially embedded economic system.

This investigation into the social relationships being built within equitable economies around local food is supported by various bodies of literature discussing local food, food access, solidarity economy, social capital, and farmers' markets. Exploring this literature in the following section highlights the importance of delving into such an issue. First, it is necessary to understand what local food is and how the local food movement has changed the agricultural landscape with positive outcomes for the environment, consumers, and producers as seen in Chapter 2. Looking at the startling state of food insecurity contextualizes the need to construct inclusive and equitable food systems within this local food movement. SNAP discount programs at farmers' markets is one way to go about doing this and there are many studies of such programs around the

country that will be discussed in Chapter 3. To address the concerns around the sort of incentive these programs are fostering, analyzing traditional neoliberal economic models in comparison to the solidarity economy principles in Chapter 4 shows how the solidarity economy can a good assessment of community and social relationships, the milestones that Food and Medicine is looking for to indicate sustainability of their Community Supported Farmers' Market program. Existing literature on the use of social capital in communities and as a measurable phenomenon provides a base for formulating inquiries into the presence of the solidarity economy as presented in Chapter 5. Looking at the research regarding the social nature of farmers' markets supports the use of the solidarity economy as a model for understanding the economic transactions of the SNAP discount program. Chapter 6 introduces the case study that is the center of this study; the Food and Medicine Community Supported Farmers Market program. The research methods are described in Chapter 7 followed by the primary findings of the study discussed in the context of the literature and indicators outlined in preceding chapters. The study ends with a discussion of potential sources of errors, recommendations for future research, and the broad conclusions that can be learned from this research.

## CHAPTER 2- Local Food

Today, local food is quite the buzz word, its supporters heralding a food revolution that will forever change agriculture in this country. The following section will introduce the concept of local food within the context of the local food movement's history and mission, followed by a discussion of the startling inequality of food access that cannot be ignored if what we seek is truly a food revolution.

### The local food movement: History and mission

Many Americans are choosing to spend their food dollars on produce and goods that have been grown or produced a little closer to home as part of a broad "local food movement" that is making people think about what they're eating. Before discussing a local food movement, it is important to understand the concept of local food. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), sales of local food totaled \$4.8 billion in 2008, constituting 1.6% of US market. It is estimated this came from 107,000 farms involved in the local food system, which amounts to 5% of total US farms. This \$4.8 billion can be broken down further to reveal roughly \$0.9 billion or 18% in direct consumer sales (i.e. at farmers markets, farm stands) and approximately \$2.7 billion or 57% in intermediate sales (i.e. at grocery stores, restaurants) (Johnson, Tadlock, & Randy, 2012).

How does one define what constitutes local food? Unfortunately, a precise definition for this concept remains ambiguous and varied. Usually, the term local food is reserved for food that is produced and marketed in a certain geographical area to which it



is confined (Johnson et al., 2012). The USDA discusses local food in terms of three indicators: distance, marketing outlet and perceived attributes.

There is a wide range of distances that constitute local, ranging from as much as 400 miles to as little as 25 miles, defined by state boundaries, bioregions, or arbitrary estimates. As a specific example, the 2007 New American Oxford Dictionary defines the new word “locavore” as a person who attempts to only consume food produced within a 100 mile radius (Martinez, 2010) though the exact stipulations of that term are certainly up for debate.

A marketing outlet refers to the method of distribution used by the farmer to get produce and goods to consumers. Eighty one percent of farms do this is through varying direct marketing techniques such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, community gardens, farm stands, and food hubs (Low & Vogel, 2011). Maine is listed in the top ten states for direct to consumer marketing constituting a large share of the state’s total agricultural sales, with 3% of sales in 2007 (Diamond & Soto, 2009).

There are many identified attributes that consumers associate with local food that can also help define the term. These attributes include but are not limited to: perceived higher quality and freshness of produce and goods; perceived emphasis on environmentally friendly practices and sustainability; perceived higher levels of food safety; belief in connection to social justice (i.e. fairer labor, fairer to farmer); knowledge of the source of consumed produce and goods; a commitment to closer relationships with farmers; and a general concern with corporate, industrial agriculture (Johnson et al., 2012). Local food often comes with a higher price tag; however a series of eight studies conducted in ten states across the country as reviewed by Martinez and colleagues found

that the perceived higher quality, support of the local economy, and environmental concerns all increased consumers' willingness to pay more (Martinez, 2010). Additionally, one in three Americans would pay higher prices for healthy foods that they believed to have ecological and social integrity (Iked 2011). In the context of this study, the above discussion about perceived attributes of local food, especially those attributes related to social justice and relationships, as well as looking at the direct marketing outlet seen in farmers markets are most relevant for defining local food.

As a movement, the current efforts to support local food has its roots in the natural food movement of 1960s. Those seeking ways to avoid the chemical ridden produce pushed in the mainstream markets began producing their own natural foods, the beginning of the organic movement (Martinez et al., 2010; Iked, 2011). Though this movement initially was supported by networks of small, local farms that supplied independent natural food stores, these stores were slowly bought up through the decades by larger stores such as Whole Foods and Wild Oats that were growing to meet the increasing consumer demand for organic foods. These larger stores were not able to work with the smaller farms, which gave rise to further industrialization as large commercial farms took up the organic torch. As the label of "organic" and "natural" became muddled with corporate branding and a lack of transparency, a new wave of food advocates argued to move beyond organic, focusing more on the origin of food; did it come from a person you trust? (Iked, 2011). This new movement is not only searching for natural and flavorful food, but also food with integrity, emphasizing values of good, clean, and fair. From chefs to culinary novices, from home kitchens, to hospitals, schools, and other

institutions, the multifaceted movement described as “part fashion, part market niche, part social movement” is taking root in communities around the country (Iked, 2011)

Thus, the local food movement is both ambiguous to define and constantly growing, incorporating elements of social, environmental, and economic integrity for farmers, consumers, and communities all while getting to know where your food is coming from. Replacing the endless sea of boxes and labels from faceless producers in the grocery store with the knowledge of who grew that food and where is at the core of the current efforts to construct a new, localized food system.

#### Food for all? Food insecurity in the US

Who has access to these local food systems? It can be said that we have two food systems in America; one for the poor riddled with food deserts lacking access to real grocery stores and lined with an endless parade of fast food restaurants, the other for everyone else who can afford to eat better by choosing organic, local, and whole food options (Winne, 2008). Local food has been criticized as being as “class based diet” (Smirl, 2011), meaning only those who have affluence are able to access and afford local food on a regular basis.

Hunger, even in the land of the plenty, affects millions of individuals and families across the country due to a lack of reliable access to food. Food security as defined by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy life” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2014). The USDA has a similar but

slightly less specific definition by saying that food security exists if there is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (Coleman-Jenson & Nord, 2013). Thus food insecurity would imply limited or uncertain access to the food needed for that active and healthy lifestyle.

As of 2012, 14.5% or roughly 17.6 million U.S. households were considered food insecure, 8.8% have low and the other 5.7% having very low food insecurity. Like other forms of inequality, food insecurity falls along racial and gendered lines with 24.6% Black-non-Hispanic and 23.3% Hispanic households insecure. Additionally, 35.4% of households headed by a single woman were food insecure. In Maine, similarly troubling statistics are true. The state is first in New England for food insecurity with roughly 15.7% of Maine households identified as such (The Good Shepherd Food Bank, 2011). According to a report compiled by the Center for American Progress in 2010, all of this food insecurity costs the nation approximately \$167.5 billion each year in a staggering “Hunger Bill”. That is \$542 per citizen. These calculation were made based on the estimated costs of the consequences of food insecurity such as hunger related illness, poor educational outcomes and undermined lifetime earnings, and private charity. In Maine specifically, the bill based on the same calculations adds up to \$787.45 million, a 19.5% increase since 2007 (Shepard, Setren, & Cooper, 2011).

One option for those facing food insecurity is to apply for to federal food assistance programs. The largest of these programs is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formally known as food stamps. With 47,636,090 participants in 2013 (USDA, 2014) SNAP serves 1 in 11 Americans each month (Narula et al., 2013). Though this program can provide vital support to thousands of Americans,

the average monthly benefit per person in 2013 was only \$133.07. There are many who face food insecurity who are unable to even meet the qualifications. Nationwide, 26% of those who are food insecure do not meet the income requirements to receive SNAP benefits. In Maine, that number is even higher with 35% of the food insecure population unable to receive assistance from SNAP. (Gundersen et al. 2013).

The common response to address such an issue is through private charity and emergency food assistance distribution. We see the rise of such charity in the 1980's with the policies of President Ronald Reagan, which stripped down of the federal food assistance programs while claiming the private sector would pick up the tab. This led to a tremendous spike in the demand for soup kitchens and food banks (Winne, 2008); however, these charities often struggle just as much as their clients, trying to provide their services through rough economic times with little government support (Narula, Scholes, Simon, & Zureick, 2013). Consequently, it can be argued that the private sector market that President Reagan believed would sufficiently address the needs of those facing food insecurity has failed (Winne, 2008).

Thus many are looking for ways to sustainably address the issue by tackling the issue from a human rights approach; the ability of a person to feed her or himself as well as their family should not depend on charity, but rather should be viewed as a human right that needs to be protected and provided by government policies (Narula et al., 2013). Many anti-hunger advocates emphasize that these policies need to address the root cause of food insecurity, namely poverty, by more equally distributing food and shifting subsidy priorities away from cheap and unhealthy commodity crops such as corn and soy to favor the production of more diverse and healthier food choices. (Narula et al., 2013).

It is not a matter of food production; enough food is produced in the country to feed every person (Feeding America, n.d.). It is a matter of affecting change in who can access what food and how, ensuring that every person, at all times, knows where they are going to get their next meal.

### CHAPTER 3: Merging Movements, Bringing SNAP to Farmers' Markets

Thanks to burgeoning efforts across the country, addressing issues of food insecurity through local food outlets such as farmers' markets is showing its potential to bridge serious gaps in food access as well as in discourse around local food.

#### SNAP at farmer's markets

Is it possible to promote this idea of food as a human right while also advocating for a shift in consumption towards local foods? "How do we ensure equity in the new food system we help to create?" (Briggs, Fisher, Lott, Miller, & Tessman, 2010). Across the country, innovative anti-hunger advocates, food activists, farmers and food policy players are finding ways to address issues of food insecurity within the framework of the local food movement. One of the most popular approaches is to increase SNAP acceptance at farmers' markets. By allowing SNAP recipients to redeem their benefits at markets, farmers' markets have the potential for playing a huge role in improving access to local and healthy food in low income areas (Winne, 2008).

The number of farmers' markets has been increasing steadily over the past couple of decades, jumping from 1,755 markets in 1994 to 8,144 in 2013. It is estimated that roughly 5,000 people visit farmers' markets per week (USDA, 2014). In terms of defining these markets, there is no legal definition of a farmers' market on the books. They range from formal entities with written rules and regulations, to informal gatherings in open spaces. (Briggs et al., 2010). The USDA takes a more technical approach to defining farmers' markets when they say "a multi-stall market at which farmer-producers sell agricultural products directly to the general public at a central or fixed location,

particularly fresh fruits and vegetables (but also meat products, dairy products, and/or grains)” (USDA, 2013). The Farmers Market Coalition, a non-profit dedicated to strengthening markets across the country, also emphasizes the gathering of farmers’ to sell directly to consumers; however, they also highlight the potential and importance of the social aspect of farmer’s markets. According to the coalition, markets are for “facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, shoppers, and communities” (Farmers’ Market Coalition, 2013). This social, more abstract purpose is just as important as its physical manifestations and will be discussed further later in the study.

At the same time as this tremendous growth in farmers markets, SNAP redemption at the markets fell from 1994-2009 despite increased SNAP expenditures. This has been attributed to the change in how SNAP is administrated (Briggs et al., 2010; Winch, 2008). Food stamps were once paper coupons that were traded and redeemed like money. In order to reduce the stigma around using these noticeable paper food stamps, the USDA changed to administrating the benefits on an EBT (electronic benefit transfer) card which look much like a debit or credit card. Thus food stamps became SNAP and were redeemed electronically, which proved to be a hard transition for farmers’ markets to make. Typically outside with no direct access to electricity or phone lines, markets ability to accept SNAP plummeted 71% between 1994 and 2009. In 2009 SNAP dollars spent at farmers markets constituted only 0.008% of total food dollars spend in America. Non-SNAP dollars at the market was 0.2%, still a low percent of the amount of food purchased, but nearly 25 times more than SNAP dollars (Briggs et al., 2010). A clear divide and crisis of access was emerging.



This divide is slowly being addressed as more and more markets are beginning to accept SNAP in its new EBT form. From 2006-2010, the USDA reports an increase in the number of markets accepting SNAP of 263%. As of 2010 it is estimated that 19% of farmers markets nationally accept SNAP (Traub, 2011). In Maine, roughly 20% of markets accept SNAP and the state is second only to Hawaii for the percent of SNAP dollars spent at farmers market (Brogan, 2013).

The markets that are able to accept SNAP have had to overcome many boundaries, especially in regards to technology. Getting electricity, a wireless internet connection, and access to an EBT machine can all be financial and logistical challenges for markets. A system for redeeming the SNAP at the vendors stalls most also be established; markets often use a token system where EBT and debit card participants exchange wooden chips for their goods which the vendors cash out on at the end of the market day. Alternatively, markets may use a receipt system, which allows for customers to select the produce they want and then cash out at the end after the vendor has filled out the receipt. Staffing can prove to be another hurdle for markets seeking to implement SNAP at their markets, for it takes additional people power to work the EBT machine as well as additional training for how to use the machine and the redemption system (Obadia, Damon, & Webber, 2011). Additionally, in order for SNAP programs at markets to be successful, the program needs to draw SNAP users and build a customer base, posing a whole new set of problems surrounding outreach as well as practical and perceptual barriers to customer participation. (Bawden, 2013).

Practical barriers are physical or fiscal limits on a person's ability to go to the market. Lack of personal transportation and/or inadequate public transportation may

limit a person's ability to access the market. The market may also be at an inconvenient time or in an inconvenient location for people. Additionally, the shopping experience can be more difficult for those who feel limited by the seasonality of produce and who lack knowledge on how to prepare and eat the food that is offered at markets (Briggs et al., 2010). The fact that many other goods that are available at grocery stores such as toilet paper and pet food are not available at farmers markets can prove an additional inconvenience for those strapped for time and transportation (Traub, 2011). Further, there are many perceptions surrounding farmers markets that may dictate a person's attendance at the market. Many SNAP participants believe that farmers markets are too expensive for their patronage and are only niches for those wealthier than them. (Briggs et al., 2010; Traub, 2011). Regardless of the truth of this perception, it is certainly widespread and poses one of the greatest challenges to getting SNAP beneficiaries to the markets.

Despite all these obstacles, farmers markets that accept SNAP are having a positive influence on the communities in which they operate. Farmers' markets are a source of economic stimulation for the surrounding business community. Research suggests that for every dollar spent at a market, 50 to 60 cents stays in the community (Bawden, 2013). A survey at markets across New York indicates that 60% of respondents would shop at stores in the market area (Farmers' Market Federation of New York, 2006). Markets in New Orleans are believed to contribute to \$1 million annually in direct and indirect benefits for not only vendors, but also the surrounding business and community (Traub, 2011). Additionally, there are significant economic benefits for smaller farms as they make a higher profit on their products at farmers' markets compared to other retail outlets (Farmers' Market Federation of New York, 2006). For

vegetables, it is shown that farmers receive only 20 cents per dollar sold in traditional grocery stores compared to receiving nearly the full retail price when sold through direct marketing outlets like farmers markets (Traub, 2011).

Though not all of the projects in the following source were related to farmers markets, a program evaluation of a number of community food projects under the umbrella organization of the Community Food Security Coalition in Portland, Oregon further reinforces the social benefits of improving access to local food for low income areas. In this evaluation, 91% of participants felt more connected with their food source; 82% had an increased appreciation for farming, gardening and food production; 83% eat more food that was locally and/or organically produced; 90% said they learned more about community food systems; and 70% had learned how race, class, and privilege affect the food system (National Research Center Inc, 2010).

### Incentivizing

One way many markets have gone about addressing this issue of affordability is through the use of economic incentive programs for those who purchase produce and goods with SNAP. These programs have sprung up around the country in the past decade, everywhere from Massachusetts, to Maryland, to Louisiana, to California. All of these programs arose from a desire to increase the purchasing power of low income individuals at farmers' markets so they could incorporate more healthy and local food into their diets (Winch, 2008; Obadia et al., 2011). There are different ways of administrating such incentive programs. Some markets use tokens, others coupon like bills, others a receipt that is filled out by vendors and redeemed later. The level of

discount can vary as can the cap on the amount of money that will be discounted. Sometimes, the incentive is limited to the purchase of just fruits and vegetables, but there are many programs that discount any item eligible for purchase with SNAP (Obadia et al., 2011). The funding for these programs is often secured from local or state agencies as well as from large grants provided by groups such as the Kellogg Foundation and Wholesome Wave Foundation. Though these programs can be difficult to implement due to the tremendous funding requirements and infrastructure requirements to maintain such a program, there seems to be evidence to suggest that incentives are helping to bring more SNAP recipients to the farmers' market. (Winch, 2008).

A program evaluation of SNAP programs in Massachusetts provides a wonderful case study for understanding the effects of incentives on SNAP purchasing. Of the 43 markets that accepted SNAP in Massachusetts, all but 13 offered some sort of incentive. The most common incentive that was offered was a dollar for dollar match of SNAP dollars spent up to \$10. The impact of these incentive programs on the markets in the state is quite remarkable. Markets that had an incentive program brought in \$4,789 in EBT sales while markets without the incentive had only \$867 in total EBT sales, a highly noticeable disparity. Furthermore, the study determined that there was a statistically significant difference in mean sales between markets that did and did not have incentive programs. The sample size of the program was too small to determine the best type of incentive program, dollar for dollar match or otherwise, but the data clearly suggests the success of markets that implement SNAP incentive programs of some kind in attracting SNAP recipients to their markets (Obadia et al., 2011).

Clearly, the economics of local food play a huge role in constructing just food systems with equal access for all. It is to this body of literature that this study now turns.

## CHAPTER 4- Economics

This study draws heavily from literature regarding economics to build a context to understand what is happening at farmers' markets with these incentive programs. The following sections delve into economics, looking at the current prevalence of neoliberal market based economic interactions and the implications this model has for agriculture and community. This will be followed by an exploration of the potential of the solidarity economy to address the needs of all stakeholders.

### Where we are now: Neoliberal markets

Economic liberalism as a way of organizing society refers to most basically a human's right to pursue entrepreneurial freedom within the institutional framework of private property rights, free markets, and free trade, with minimal interference from the state (Thorsen & Lie, 2009). Free markets are the keystone of the neoliberal paradigm in practice and philosophy, dictating how goods and services are exchanged and the manner in which these transactions occur. Often, this manner is with little regard to the social fabric of societies as values of community, solidarity, and equality are trumped in favor of maximum efficiency and highest level of competition (Garrett-Peltier & Scharber, 2008).

The globalization of these neoliberal markets over the past decades has caused growing concern regarding the increased inequality between the have and have nots in countries around the world as powerful corporations undermine communities with little to no accountability (Laurent et al., 2001; Whybrow, 2005). All of this has tremendous consequences in the realm of agriculture as well, as food security and community

wellbeing is increasingly jeopardized by a fragile, market driven global food system that sacrifices land and labor in the pursuit of neoliberal efficiency and profit (Gross, 2011; Duncan, 2013). Thus, it is important to understand what these markets are, the concerns surrounding their dominance of this economic thought and the implications it all has for food systems.

Political economist and sociologist Karl Polanyi provides a critical framework in which to understand markets and their role in not only economics, but also in social and political life. In his most famous work, The Great Transformation, Polanyi defines the market economy as a self-regulating system of markets where order is maintained by price and market values. Many would argue that this is a natural culmination of economic evolution of human society, pointing to the growth of markets from small time trade to the global markets we see today. Polanyi would argue differently, instead insisting that while there have been examples of markets throughout history, there has never been an entire economy based on markets until now. Where many would argue that markets are the natural manifestation of human nature to be competitive and act on self-interest, Polanyi would again counter with a telling of history that shows how markets were artificially created, ironically for neoliberalism today, though government intervention (Polanyi, 1944).

Throughout history, economies were embedded in social interactions, order maintained through mechanisms of reciprocity, redistribution, and household structures. Thus, Polanyi argues that economic activities are inherently social, the product of human interactions (Polanyi, 1944). With the Industrial Revolution came the rise of machines which necessitated a change in the mode of production. Land, labor, and money needed

to be organized into a market artificially through government intervention to maximize the efficiency of rational, industrial production. This marked a drastic shift in not only the economic but also the social organization of society as human and natural life was subordinated by the “laws” of the market which Polanyi argues are not nearly as natural or as inevitable as the market fiction would like to have you believe (Polanyi, 1944).

It is these markets of commodification and subordination that neoliberal philosophy so emphatically emphasizes, magnifying the concerns associated with market economies. The demand for constant growth in markets has severely strained the finite pool of natural resources to the point where the world is faced with a resource crisis. There are no longer untouched reserves of resources and land that can be turned into a foundation for the growth of a capitalist system (Marsden & Franklin, 2013). Additionally, markets promote a highly individualist view of the world, devaluing community connection and the original social nature of economic exchange. An early pioneer of socialism and the cooperative economics movement, social reformer Robert Owen cautions against the evil of over individualism and atomization as promoted by industry’s drive for profit and short term gains, which he believes to be detrimental to human happiness (Polanyi, 1944). These cautions become reality under neoliberal policies that have drastically removed the state from any responsibility for the wellbeing of all, instead counting on the market and the private sector to pick up the slack, as is seen with the rise of volunteer food relief agencies with the gutting of government food programs (Gross, 2011).



## Neoliberal policies and agriculture

Neoliberal policies have even more systemic effects on our food and agriculture. In his book Civic Agriculture, Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community, Lyson describes the shift in American agriculture towards this highly mechanized and industrialized food system (Lyson, 2004). Early 1800's economics were strongly rooted in the household, closely knit into social relationships with family, friends and community. Thus, the economy was socially embedded within the local community in which it operated. There were multiple venues for economic transactions such as open air markets, trading posts and barter systems.

These more informal and socially grounded conduits of economic activity were soon challenged in the late 1800's by the shift of manufacturing to factories and the mass scale production heralded by the Industrial Revolution. Lyson makes the argument that this industrialization was not only brought about by technological advancements, but also by the capitalist motive of increased profits. With this drive, specialization of labor and tasks rose with mass markets and increased production.

Farming methods were not spared from the industrialization craze. Lyson argues that modern farming practices are an attempt to standardize and rationalize farming production much like the factory had streamlined manufacturing. The goal was to maximize production through meticulous efficiency, despite the variability and instability of factors in farming such as the environmental conditions and climate. Not only did this process entail massive investments in new technology such as tractors, synthetic fertilizers and biotech research, but also industrialization tore up the economics of farming from its roots in the community and transplanted it into a scientific marketing

model of maximizing efficient use of land, labor, capital and management. It was feared that social relationships would negatively interfere with these market principles. Thus today, we have isolated farmers following formulations of mass production and profit void of community influence and connection, defining success by market economics principles. But Lyson is careful to emphasize that the importance placed on these economic concepts is not innate but rather socially constructed to be incompatible with social and community ties. If farming has been constructed in a way that favors industry and mass production, surely it could be constructed in an alternative way.

All of this has implications for the agricultural sector as neoliberal effects on food systems around the world are examined. As discussed previously, the industrial revolution changed the faces and methods of farming forever as agricultural processes were forcibly morphed into rational and efficient processes (Lyson, 2004). This directly connects to the emergence of neoliberal markets as outlined by Polanyi and others. This sort of productionist paradigm in food systems prizes quantity over quality by means of cheap energy inputs and endless natural resources. Within the logic of neoliberal capitalism and the rationality of the markets, these practices of mono-cropping and externalizing waste and pollution make sense since profit is emphasized more than any other aspect of the economy (Gross, 2011).

The current struggles in South Korea for food sovereignty provide an ideal case study for the real world manifestations of these concerns. As industry rose in South Korea, agriculture declined, down to 7% of the population in 2010 from 50% in 1970. Over these decades, the country was increasingly incorporated into the global food systems as its agriculture sector fell under the influence of the United States and global

corporations. The Green Revolution of the 1970s introduced chemicals and fertilizers and encouraged mono-cropping and the production of cash crops. The neoliberal policies that characterized much of the 1980's economics around the world pried open Korean markets for free trade, changing the agricultural policy in the country to favor food imports and focus instead on manufacturing. Consequently, the grain self-sufficiency of the country, 70% in the 1970's, is now just 20% today (Yoon, Song, & Lee, 2013).

Thus the socially constructed rise of neoliberal markets has drastically shifted the economic landscape of the world, promoting individualism and rational business thinking over the traditional social and community roots of agriculture. There are efforts around the world to create an alternative to this paradigm that roots the economy back in the communities,

#### An alternative: The solidarity economy

Academics, public leaders, and communities around the world are restructuring economic practices for the better. The solidarity economy offers one such alternative, by emphasizing the value of nonmarket factors such as community ties and social relationships. This section will discuss the parameters of the solidarity economy and provide examples of its implementation around the world. Additionally, social capital will be proposed as a measurement of the presence of the solidarity economy followed by a discussion of how the social nature of farmers' markets lends itself to potential of social capital and solidarity economy to build community in the local food movement.

Moving beyond the warm and fuzzy notions of abstracted "community", the solidarity economy as a technical term is difficult to define due to the wide variety of

language and concepts used to describe it. Even a universal name for this type of economy is hard to nail down. In addition to the solidarity economy, the social economy, the community economy, and the solidarity-social economy are also used to describe a similar range of economic activity and practices (Fonteneau et al., 2011; Gross, 2011; Allard & Matthaei, 2010). For the purpose of this paper, the similarities between the usages of all these terms will be emphasized and encapsulated under the term solidarity economy.

There are many different ways to consider the solidarity economy. Many approaches emphasize the presence of different solidarity economy organizations and formal institutions (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, n.d.). These organizations can be conceptualized in two categories. Community associations consist of organizations that operate within free associations based on similar beliefs and goals, such as many non-profits and economic interest groups. Social enterprises are businesses seeking to address societal problems through economic means. These enterprises are often cooperatively run and place a strong emphasis on economic democracy. Though social enterprises are producing goods and services on the market to make a profit, they are doing so in the pursuit of a social goal, such as serving the underprivileged or economically disadvantaged, coupling social good with market productivity (Fonteneau et al., 2011).

There is tension in the literature as to the degree of this market productivity. The practices within the solidarity economic model can be viewed as democratically controlled investments, working within market systems but using alternative values and structures that stem the negative manifestations of purely market based, bottom line

driven operations (Neamtan, 2011). Conversely, some argue that the solidarity economy must be completely severed from the current conceptualization of profit driven markets, drawing from a more Marxian understanding of economics and rejecting all forms of capitalist accumulation of wealth (Mance, 2007). A middle ground perspective emphasizes the difference between cooperation and individualistic interest pursuing profit above all else, seeing the potential to reform existing markets and institutions through paradigms like free trade while simultaneously creating new ones with a new set of values (Allard & Matthaiei, 2010).

Despite the clear variance in conceptualization, there are identifiable principles that thread through the literature to create a unifying picture of the values system upon which the solidarity economy is built. The foundation of this values system most fundamentally consists of acting in response to community needs and not in the pursuit of profit (Neamtan, 2011). Though many solidarity economy organizations do accumulate and invest capital, the typical goals of maximizing economic gain do not serve as the primary economic platform for an initiative following the solidarity model. This is because of the value that is placed on meeting and cultivating the economic needs of all people. From this, other key egalitarian principles shape the directive and operation of the solidarity economy (Allard & Matthaiei, 2010).

Participation of community members is the obvious but perhaps underappreciated life blood of any economic system, but particularly within the solidarity model. The participation is voluntary and autonomous, meaning it was not mandated by the government or any other hierarchical power and made as a free choice by the individual (Fonteneau et al., 2011).

By ensuring voluntary and autonomous choice, the solidarity economy easily nurtures values or democratic and non-exploitative practices, which in terms guarantees individual and collective freedoms (Mance, 2007). Here we see the important collective element of these sorts of initiatives, as cooperative ideals guide the formation of the initiative as well as the decision making process. It is the collective will of people joining voluntarily to meet the needs of all that ensures mutuality and accountability between those organizers and recipients. Though there are varying extents to which this democracy is enacted in the structure of the organization or initiative, the wellbeing of all individuals involved, from community members to workers, is always ensured by any decision or directive (Fonteneau et al., 2011).

This collective element is further mirrored in the principle of solidarity itself. One cannot value the importance of cooperation and mutuality if it is not also valued who is being included in that mutual cooperation. Thus, the solidarity economy emphasizes solidarity as a means of promoting inclusion amongst all who are affected by the initiative. Respecting the diversity in identity, culture, and thought that inevitably characterizes any community is essential to addressing community needs in an egalitarian way that may also further the mission of economic, social, and/or environmental justice (Miller, 2010). This solidarity is grassroots, coming from the bottom up, which further ensures that all voices are being included in the initiative (Neamtan, 2011). These voices also provide a diverse set of skills, knowledge and resources that can be pooled to most equally and accurately address the needs of the community within the solidarity framework (Fonteneau et al., 2011).

Though all of these values can play an important part in directing the solidarity economy and the organizations and initiatives that it encompasses, pluralism plays an equally important role in conceptualizing the solidarity economy. As described by Ethan Miller, these values described above are by no means fixed goals that must be met to a uniform degree to be considered part of the solidarity economy. These are very lofty and abstracted ideals to be demanded of all to the same extent to be evaluated in a consistent manner. Instead, Miller emphasizes the pluralistic nature of the solidarity economy, meaning there is no one way to do things, no blue print of how the economy should be constructed. The solidarity economy initiatives work organically and collectively using the aforementioned values as guideposts and conversation starters to inspire and connect individuals rather than an ultimatum of qualification in need of excessively detailing and explanation (Miller, 2010).

This pluralistic approach can be a way to counter the critique of this sort of economy's reliance on a warm and fuzzy predisposed model of the abstract concept of community. Plurality allows for a more organic and bottom up construction of an authentic community. Communities are not simply a collection of individuals coming together to fit a cookie cutter model, but rather the result of creating something new and not attempting to fit into a pre-existing construct (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

So what does this solidarity economy look like in action? There are numerous pockets of this sort of economic model developing throughout the world approaching from different angles and to different degrees. Quebec, Canada is home to one of the most expansive networks of solidarity economic activity through the Chantier de l'économie sociale. With its founding in 1996, this organization provided a much needed

umbrella for the various cooperative and social enterprises that were popping up around the province. The Chantier provided a platform for these organizations to have a voice in public policy and carve out a place for the solidarity economy in the Quebec economy. The organization has also been very successful in raising grant money, nearly \$10 million from private and government sources, to fund the startup of cooperatives and non-profits to fuel job creation. In 2006, this fund was expanded to create the Chantier Trust, which controls a \$52 million investment fund to address the needs of the solidarity economy stakeholders (Neamtan, 2011).

The solidarity economy is also quite active in central and South America. Brazil is emerging as a leader in the solidarity economy front with nearly 20,000 enterprises that meet the criteria and 1.8 million people participating in this alternative economy. After the economic crisis in Latin America during the 1990s, a study by the Brazilian Institute of Applied Economic Research (BIAER) reveals that between 2001 and 2011, the poverty rate of the country declined by 57% thanks mostly to the growth of the solidarity economy during this time period. The study also revealed that during this same time period, small businesses in the country amassed 39% of their income from the solidarity economy. The BIAER believes the solidarity economy has such an impact because of the nature of the model of the organizations, which include the voices of poor people and gives them good positions within the enterprises. Findings like these suggest that the solidarity model not only influences economic practices, but has distinct implications for social betterment, especially among low income populations (Nobrega, 2013).

In Nova Scotia, partnerships between solidarity economy organizations and university researchers are forming to address issues of community food security in rural



areas. These partnerships so far have yielded programs that deal with issues such as meeting the dietary needs of low income women during pregnancy, getting more local food into the schools with a garden program, and empowering food choices for low income individuals by hosting educational, community based dinners. All of these projects represent just a few cases of how the solidarity economy in Nova Scotia and other Atlantic provinces are working to address community food security, showing how the resources and social goals of solidarity economy organizations can be used to support the creation of local and just food systems (Williams et al., 2012).

Thus, the vibrancy of the solidarity economy and its values is evident as seen in the examples of organizations and enterprises operating under this model. But as shown by the scope of the economic model's values and the variety of manifestations it can take in a community, the concept of the solidarity economy is a fairly broad and ambiguous term. Yet this study aims to measure the presence of this economy and needs to utilize clear and grounded indicators.

## CHAPTER 5: Social Capital

The concept of social capital provides such grounded indicators for studying the presence of the solidarity economy. With an emphasis on networks in which people actively participate through individual and collective action, the concept of social capital incorporates the previously discussed values that make up the solidarity economy and provides a theoretical as well as tangible platform from which to study and measure the extent of a solidarity economy in a given area. The following section outlines the concept of social capital and its usefulness as a measure at farmers' markets.

### What is social capital?

The idea of social capital was first advanced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Focusing on the role and benefits to a given individual, Bourdieu used social capital to explain what a person can gain from social ties. Social capital in this sense is essentially what resources are available to a person based solely on their belonging to a certain social network (Portes & Landolt, 2000). Thus, just as one can gain physical capital through the purchasing of real estate or human capital through pursuing a higher education, one can gain social capital by navigating the social networks to which one is privy. In essence, it's who you know that can get you places.

Elaborating on this individualistic approach to social capital, Portes and Landolt discuss the sources or motivation for the giving of such social capital through these social networks. They identify two main categories of social capital, instrumental and altruistic. Instrumental social capital can come from one of two interactions; a face to face transaction with expected simple reciprocity, I'll do something for you if you do

something for me, or more complexly, transactions governed by larger social structures that guarantee eventual reciprocity but have no immediate collateral, instead relying on trust. Traditionally, this cultivation of trust and community ties through networks and distribution of social capital has been identified as a means of social control, meaning the expectation of one to observe common social norms intrinsically prevented deviance and guaranteed stability (Portes & Landolt, 2000).

Altruistic social capital takes two primary forms, the first being moral obligation and the second of perhaps more significant importance to this study being bounded solidarity, the desire to support those in the same geographic, ethnic, religious or other community such as unions. Giving out of moral obligation is based on a set of values while bounded solidarity relies heavily upon a sense of loyalty (Portes & Landolt, 2000).

Following in the lines of social trust and bounded solidarity, there is a growing body of literature that discusses the community implications of social capital. Those such as political scientist Robert Putnam argue that it is not only individuals who can possess and utilize social capital, but in fact communities, cities, even whole nations can do the same, positively influencing their economic development.

According to Putman, social capital is “features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995). No longer is social capital just what can be done for an individual, but it’s what can be done for a community as a collective (Flora, 1998). This is accomplished through acts of civic engagement, which Putnam describes as act such as voting, membership in civic organizations, and general neighborliness. The sorts of networks that are formed through these practices encourage general reciprocity, social

trust, enhanced communication for enhanced collective action and conflict resolution, as well as the broadening of the sense of self from “I” to “we” as community members recognize the importance of collective benefits over individual opportunism (Putnam, 1995) (Hill 2011).

This sort of reciprocity and trust is generated from active participation in the community’s social networks and the understood social norms that govern said participation. Though unwritten, these norms are able to function in small communities where people value the same outcomes and goals. For these networks and norms to be engaged, community members need to be actively engaging with them in order to build that sense of reciprocity and trust. This requires more action on the part of the community members than if they were to receive services or achieve a desired goal through monetary means or through charity. Participation in the social capital context mandates that the community members are creators and not victims (Bullen & Onyx, 1998).

Central to the importance of community social capital is the potential for increased development (Flora, 1998). Putnam spent several years studying newly implemented regional governing bodies in Italy. These institutions had nearly identical bureaucratic structures, but were operating in a diverse range of regional characteristics, especially in terms of history and social practices. What Putnam and the others found was of no surprise to them. The regional governments that were the most successful were in regions with strong civic engagement, as measured by participation in everything from elections to soccer clubs (Putnam, 1993). An historical analysis shows that this level of civic engagement in the regions that were marked as successful such as Tuscany reveal roots of solidarity formed by merchant guilds and religious affiliation reaching back

hundreds of years. Putnam argues these same regions went on to be rich and successful as a result of this civicness, which encouraged mutual reciprocity and efficiency through collaboration and trust (Putnam, 1993).

### Social capital as a measurable phenomenon

Social capital provides a measurable lens for examining the solidarity. As elaborated in their study *Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in North South Wales*, authors Paul Bullen and Jenny Onyx conclusively determine the measurability of social capital and elements of the concept that can be identified and translated into questions for investigations. The authors define social capital as a community wide interlocking networks in which citizens actively and willing participated. These networks are based on understood reciprocity, trust and other social norms that allowed for the secure pooling or resources into the commons (Bullen & Onyx, 1998). Their themes for identifying this social capital are as follows:

- Participation in local community
- Proactivity in this participation
- Feelings of trust and safety
- Neighborhood connections
- Tolerance of diversity
- Perceived value of own life in society
- Connections at work

These themes placed in the context of the literature on the solidarity economy will help to formulate the indicators used to measure the solidarity economy, as will be discussed later in this report.

### Social capital at farmers' markets

Studying farmer's markets as public and social spaces shows how the markets naturally lend themselves to social capital, making them the perfect space to investigate and cultivate the solidarity economy. They not only have the potential to support local food, but also community.

Farmers markets are seen as an alternative to the massive global food system, not only because they are smaller in size and scope, but because of the incorporation of values such trust and social connection (Hinrichs, 2000). Building bonds based on these values is further resistance to the globalization of food as people re-embed themselves in their communities (Hunt, 2006). The social embeddedness of economic activity at the farmers market is evident as consumers build bonds of solidarity face to face with the producers through economic transactions (Lyson et al., 1995; Hunt, 2006), laying out networks of social capital to further support the community.

A study of eight farmers markets in Maine supports the presence and strength of social capital formed through this socially imbedded economy (Hunt, 2006). Sixty two percent of vendors at the surveyed markets identified having a direct relationship with their customers as the most important reason to sell at the farmers markets, followed by 36% indicating more profit as their more important motivation. On the consumer end of the relationship, freshness was listed as the most important reason for shopping at the

markets, though helping farmers and contact with farmers were the next two most important. In an open ended question that asked the respondent to describe why they shop at farmers markets in three words, words describing social interactions and market atmosphere made up 43% of the answers. As a whole, 98% of the respondents said they had fun at the market. Ninety four percent of consumers said they talked with vendors and 81% said they meet people they know at the market. The evident importance of the social aspects at the farmers market in this study seem to indicate that the consumers economic decisions are socially embedded, providing unique motives and values that are not always found in purely market-logical exchanges (Hunt, 2006).

This social aspect of farmers' markets is seen at markets around the country. A study of farmers' markets in Baltimore discusses the potential the markets have for building social capital in communities. This capital is built through the formation of relationships between producers and consumers, a unique feature of the farmers' market space (Traub, 2011). This social benefit of farmers' markets is further supported by a study conducted in British Columbia that found in a customer survey that 70% of their respondents spend more than 30 minutes at the market, about half the time spent shopping, the other half spent talking to vendors and friends (Connell, 2012). People are coming to the market to not only get food, but also talk, to socialize, suggesting there is much more to these public spaces than vegetables and baked goods. When asked to indicate the reasons for coming to farmers markets, many respondent in New York stated it was the "experience" that drew them. The diverse pool of people from different ethnic, economic, and social groups creates a vibrant and unique venue for interaction, relationship making, and community building (Farmers' Market Federation of New York,

2006). All of these benefits are only intensified as more people are able to access farmers' markets thanks to SNAP acceptance programs in markets like those described above and dozens others across the nation.

Though it is easy to champion a more social economy and rage at the injustices linked with globalized neoliberalism, market economies should not be completely demonized and ignored. Social embeddedness is not mutually exclusive of market influence (Hinrichs, 2000). Sociologist Fred Block argues that all economies fluctuate on a spectrum of marketness; the high end of the spectrum represents nothing interfering with the market while the low end represents a high concentration of social relationships and networks. Block also presents a spectrum of instrumentalism to describe a consumer's motivation; the high end of the spectrum meaning strong and rational individual choice to maximize self-benefits while the low end suggests prioritizing non-economic factors such as social ties and morality (Block, 1990).

The market based economic element of farmers markets is fairly evident and can play an important role for many vendors and consumers. A survey at New York farmers markets found that better earnings and the experience interacting with their customers were important motivations for the vendor's participation in the farmer's market, showing a fluctuation of marketness. A survey at markets in Massachusetts revealed the motivations of customers at the market were fueled by a desire to improve personal health as well as a concern for the farmers and the environment, showing a spectrum of instrumentalism (Hinrichs, 2000). Thus it is important not to treat the concepts of the market and social embeddedness as completely incompatible and recognize the potential positive influences the market economics can have for the stakeholders at the markets.



Keeping in mind the history of the local food movement and the evident need to address food insecurity, this study will use the economic analysis outlined above to evaluate the community that may or may not be forming at the markets in the CSFM program. Understanding the role of both the market and social capital in economic transaction will provide a unique and constructive lens to access the potential the solidarity economy has to build community around local food.

## CHAPTER 6- Case Study

Drawing from the previously discussed literature, this section tells the story of the specific SNAP discount program on which this study will focus.

### Putting the community in Community Supported Farmers' Markets with solidarity

The success of SNAP incentives has certainly been felt by the program Community Supported Farmers Markets, a double bucks SNAP incentive program that operates at three farmers markets in the Bangor, Maine area. The program is implemented and organized by Food and Medicine, a non-profit based in Brewer, Maine, which fundraises the matching dollars from the surrounding community, hence the name of the program. Food and Medicine as an organization has always showed a commitment to empowering and supporting the working class in Maine, building solidarity between union workers, farmers, childcare providers and hundreds of other hard working Mainers across the state (Food and Medicine, 2014).

Though a central tenet to their organization, Food and Medicine has no specific means of describing solidarity, though they often cite the following quote from Eugene Debs when discussing the concept, "Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment, but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results." Thus, solidarity speaks to the need for building a common identity between all so that a shared interest can be articulated and acted upon. A mutual understanding of other's circumstances coupled with an understanding of purpose leads

to tangible bonds of solidarity as opposed to rhetoric that often only leads to charity and lacks long term solutions. The farmer cares about the laid off mill worker because the farmer can empathize with the worker as a member of the working class with similar interests and needs in life. That's the solidarity Food and Medicine wishes to cultivate (McKay, 2014).

This solidarity takes many forms throughout the organization's organizing and outreach, one example being Solidarity Harvest. Started in 2003, the program organizes donations of food from local farmers into Thanksgiving baskets for laid off workers across the state. Wanting to further strengthen this solidarity around local food, the organization looked for other ways they could support food access as well as local businesses and the local economy. Whatever project Food and Medicine started had to not only align with their mission of solidarity, but also had to follow the organization's belief in providing help without proof of need, giving "a hand up and not a hand out", and treating everyone with respect and dignity regardless of their current personal circumstances. Starting with the Ohio Street market in Bangor, Maine, the organization began to fundraise money in the spring of 2011 to reduce the prices of produce for SNAP recipients. After the organization received a grant from the Betterment Foundation of \$5,000 in the Fall of 2011, the market program began to solidify and spread. In 2012, the Community Supported Farmers Market (CSFM) program operated at both the Ohio Street. and Bangor farmers market, bringing in \$24,511 in total EBT revenue with 550 total EBT transactions (Sweeney, 2014).

The most recent season in 2013 saw a dramatic increase, adding a third market site in Brewer and nearly tripling sales by bringing in \$64,346 in total EBT revenue with

2,000 EBT transactions. Food and Medicine fundraised \$30,000 for the program for the 2013 season. The CSFM program continues to be funded through some external grants, but the majority of that amount is fundraised through the efforts of the organization and its volunteers. \$15,000 of the programs funding was locally sourced; many market volunteers report seeing some the CSFM participants contributing a dollar or two of their own money towards the program at the collection jars they had at the market booth as a sort of pay-it-forward reciprocity, further building on the model of solidarity Food and Medicine wishes to cultivate (Sweeney, 2014).

But concerns have been raised about the direction and long term sustainability of the program. At a meeting of participant farmers and market vendors at the conclusion of the 2013 season, those in attendance discussed what some of them saw as a potentially dangerous dependency of vendors on the program. Some thought that the customers were only coming because of discount they received on the goods they bought. If the discount were to be reduced, would their patronage to the market similarly change? Though all of the vendors in attendance agreed they would continue participating in the program even if they suffered a small loss in their profits, they were very interested in exploring what exactly was being incentivized and setting goals that supported both the mission of Food and Medicine and the wellbeing of the market.

How can these concerns be addressed in the context of Food and Medicine's mission of solidarity and the evident need to improve access to local food for low income individuals? The following chapter will outline how the study proposes to undertake the above conundrum by discussing methods and measures that align with the goals of all

stakeholders and explores the question of solidarity and community within the context of the previous described literature.

## CHAPTER 7: Research Methods

### Methodology

This study uses quantitative data analysis by conducting multiple choice question surveys to identify social relationships between the CSFM participants and market vendors. In addition to these two population groups, SNAP users who are not participants in the CSFM program were also surveyed to serve as a control group for the presence of relationships.

The surveys are all close ended questions, either multiple choice questions such as *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Making local food more accessible (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers market, etc) for all is important for our community* or questions that ask the participant to use scales such as: *Why do you choose to come to the market? Rank each of these items on a scale from 1 to 5, 1=not important at all 5=very important.* Participants were invited to share any additional thoughts they had about the program or the research project at the end of the survey.

A variety of methods were used to conduct the surveys. The vendor surveys were administered over the phone with contact information given at meetings at Food and Medicine by vendors willing to participate as well as in person at the Orono Farmers' Market, which runs year round, for vendors who also participated in Bangor, Brewer, or Ohio Street markets. A total of 15 vendor surveys were completed out of approximately

40 vendors who participate in the program at all three markets. The CSFM participant surveys were more difficult to administer due to the fact that was difficult to track down these people while the market was not in session. Some of these surveys were conducted over the phone from contact information provided from Food and Medicine and from University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4-H staff who had contact information from their Market Kids program. Some of these surveys were also conducted at local food cupboards in Bangor and Brewer. This yielded 22 survey responses from roughly 500 customers who participated in the CSFM program last session. The SNAP recipients who had not participated in the CSFM program were also surveyed in person at these food cupboards. Participants at the food cupboards were asked whether they had participated in the CSFM program before and the proper version of the survey was given to the participant based on their response to this question. Though there was some inconsistency with asking this participation question at the beginning, so there is potential for some of those who took the non CSFM survey to actually have participated in the CSFM program, though this group would be few. A total of 33 non-CSFM participants were surveyed.

An important philosophy behind not only the research of this study by also the origins of this whole project is the concept of action research. Action research is “a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). This research framework thus breaks down barriers between the “experts” and the stakeholders in the communities that are living the social realities that academy studies and more often than not keeps tucked

away in their ivory tower of knowledge and privilege. The knowledge, input, and resources of all those involved are equally valued in democratic relationships that pay attention to issues of power and privilege within the social reality being studied as well as the research process itself. Thus, action research is distinct from other approaches to research such as pure or applied which often are not sensitive to these dynamics and do not have such a goal oriented purpose. Action research is often done with the aim of finding solutions that are tailored to specific locals and situations and does not focus as much on generalizable facts of conclusions (Singer, 2007).

This study has attempted to follow these principles as much as possible through the research process. An honors thesis is the perfect opportunity to bridge the gaps between academia and the communities in which they operate by providing much needed research for local municipalities, organizations, businesses, or institutions. With this potential in mind, this specific study was born from collaboration between the primary investigator and Erin Sweeney, the Agricultural Director at Food and Medicine. The needs of the organization and of the honors thesis requirements have been taken into account throughout the process, from selecting a research topic, to the outlining the goals of the research, to designing the surveys. This collaboration allowed for the pooling of resources and knowledge between the stakeholders, which ultimately provided a richer more inclusive context from which to construct this research project. This inclusivity is crucial to finding meaningful solutions that benefit all the parties involved. Thus, the results of this research will be reflective of not only academic pursuits and interests, but also of community needs and knowledge, providing a more holistic understanding of the

social reality being studied and suggesting the most inclusive and sensible means of moving forward.

#### Measures

This study is primarily concerned with measuring the presence of the solidarity economy within the Community Supported Farmers Market program. Each survey question corresponds with one of five indicators derived from the social capital and solidarity economy literature discussed earlier. As outlined previously, the Bullen and Onyx study, 1998, identified the following themes of social capital that could be used as measures of the phenomena in research:

- Participation in local community
- Proactivity in this participation
- Feelings of trust and safety
- Neighborhood connections
- Tolerance of diversity
- Perceived value of own life in society
- Connections at work

These themes can be contextualized to fit the nature of the populations being studied. For CSFM and non-CSGM participants, the above themes can be translated as follows: proactive and voluntary participation in the CSFM program; feelings of trust in farmers and safety at market; connection between SNAP participant and vendor; tolerance of diversity, meaning difference of market from grocery store, the selection of produce, the different perspective and circumstances of the vendors; perceived value of contribution and participation in the CSFM program. For the vendors, the Bullen and



Onyx themes can be adapted as follows: proactive and voluntary participation in the CSFM program; feelings of trust in SNAP participants and safety at markets; connections between vendor and SNAP participant; tolerance of diversity, meaning issues of stigma surrounding SNAP, the different perspective and circumstances of the SNAP participants; perceived value of contribution and participation in the CSFM program.

How do these themes correspond with the solidarity economy to provide useful measures for this study? Looking at the solidarity economy literature, similar themes can be identified:

- Voluntary and autonomous participation
- Democratic, cooperative, collective action done with mutuality and concern for the well-being of all
- Social relationships and solidarity, incorporating ideals of inclusion, respect for diversity, and grassroots action by and for the people
- Pluralism that allows for multiple potential paths as well as flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs of unique communities

These solidarity themes map easily onto the themes adapted from the Bullen and Onyx study to serve as the basis for the following indicators distilled from both lists:

- Voluntary and active participation in the CSFM program
- Reciprocity and mutuality reflected by a concern for the well-being of all
- Loyalty and connection to vendors or customers, as well as food source
- Inclusion in the CSFM program as well as the local food and food access movements as described earlier

- Social relationships and the importance of, especially when compared to the market economic aspect of the incentive

These five indicators will be used to determine the presence of the solidarity economy in the analysis of the survey research of this study. There are attributes in both the social capital and solidarity economy themes identified previously that are not explicitly addressed by the five themes listed above. Though more indicators could be generated from the identified solidarity and social capital themes, this study found those five to be the most important. Additionally, there were concerns regarding the length of the survey from Food and Medicine and additional questions generated by more indicators may have increased the length of the survey to a point where participants would not be as willing to participate or as engaged while taking the survey. The full surveys can be viewed in Appendix A.

The results of this study will be discussed in the context of these indicators to determine the extent of the solidarity economy in the Community Supported Farmers' Market program.

## CHAPTER 8: Findings and Discussion

As noted, the sample sizes studied are small and thus, before discussing the findings, it is important to note the lack of generalizability of these results. This problem will be discussed more fully at a later point. Despite this set back, the surveys that were conducted highlight some interesting findings and lay a foundation upon which future studies can build. The following section will describe and briefly discuss key findings from the surveys of all three sample groups organized within the parameters of the five social capital indicators; participation, mutuality and reciprocity, loyal and connection, inclusion, and social relationships. This will be followed by a further break down of the data, looking at non-CSFM participants who had attended the market, versus those who had not attended.

### Participation

There were several notable trends related to the indicator of participation. As Figure 1 illustrates, it would appear that the CSFM program increased the frequency of attendance at the markets for those who participated in the program as 55% of the respondents went to the market only once or twice a year before the program, but 64% went to the market 2 or 3 or more than 3 times a month after participating in the program. This increase in attendance suggests that the CSFM participants are actively engaging in the program by changing their behavior to increase participation, supporting the presence of social capital. Comparatively, 56% of non-CSFM participants had never or rarely attended the farmers' market, though a surprising 41% responded they sometimes or often frequent the market as seen in Figure 2. This may be attributed to the fact that some

of those who took the non-CSFM survey were in actuality CSFM participants. It could also show that even those who do not participate in the discount program are relatively committed to going to the farmers' market.

Figure 1-Frequency of farmers' market attendance for CSFM participants before and after the program

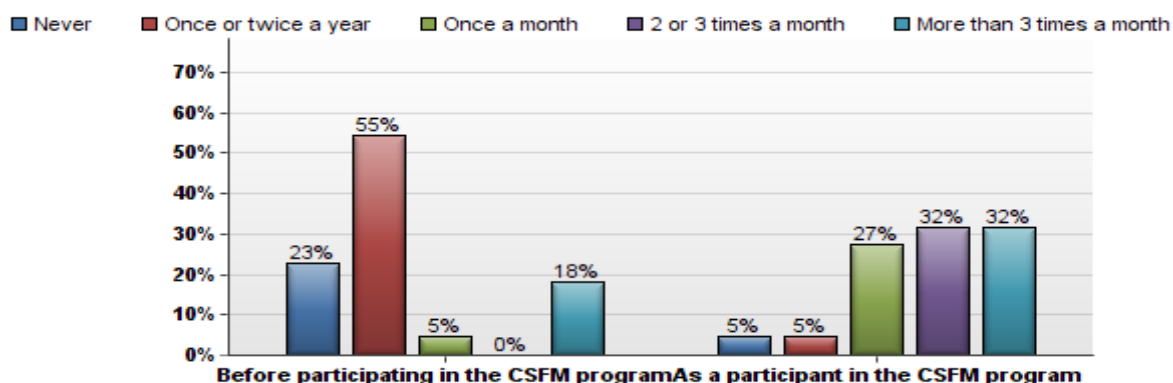


Figure 2- Frequency of farmers' market attendance for non-CSFM participants

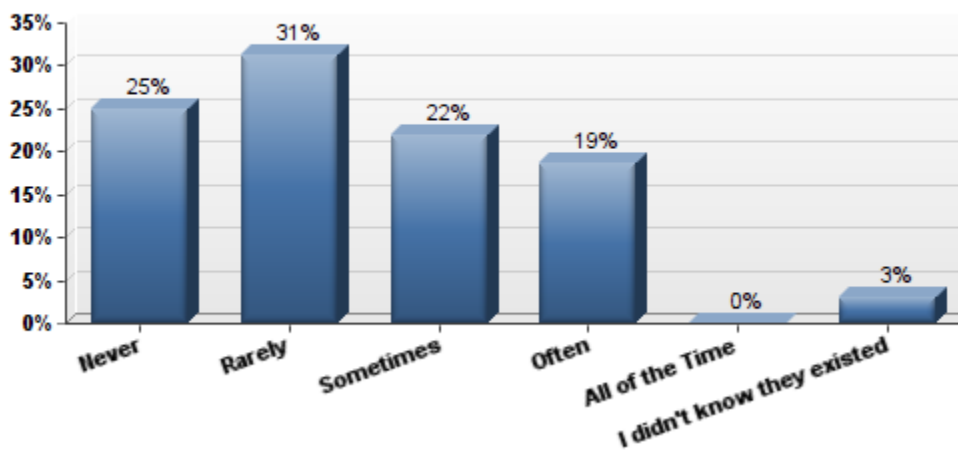
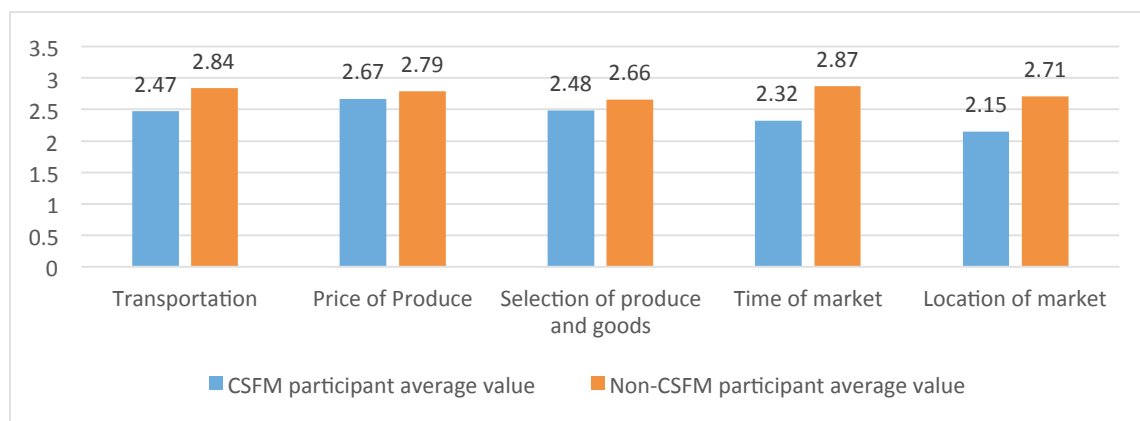


Figure 3 illustrates the potential barriers for those attending the farmers' markets. Those who had not participated in the CSFM program reported that these factors affected their ability at a slightly higher rate than did those who had participated in the program. Most of the factors have a very similar average value, suggesting that there is not one particular factor that affects their ability more than any other. However, all the factors

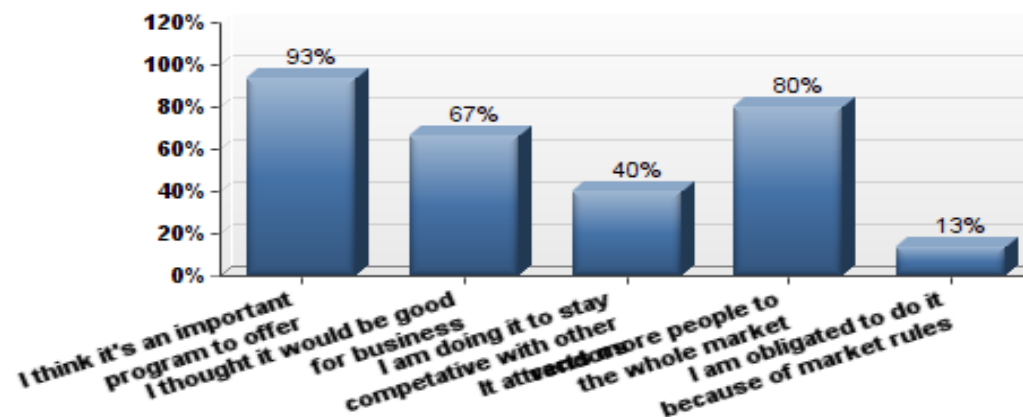
have average values greater than 2 but less than 3, suggesting that all of the factors affect the respondents at least to some extent.

Figure 3- Factors affecting ability or desire to attend the farmers' market on a scale of 1 to 5



In terms of participation in the program for the vendors, more of them said they believed it is an important program to offer, suggesting they believe in the importance of providing a discount to SNAP participants. Though as Figure 4 demonstrates, the belief that the program brings more people to the market and that it would be good for business were also of similar relevance for the vendors. All three of these responses are active reasons, meaning they are willingly and actively engaging in the program as opposed to being required by market rules. This supports the presence of social capital because of the vendors' voluntary and active participation.

Figure 4- Response rate to reasons for vender participation in the CSFM program

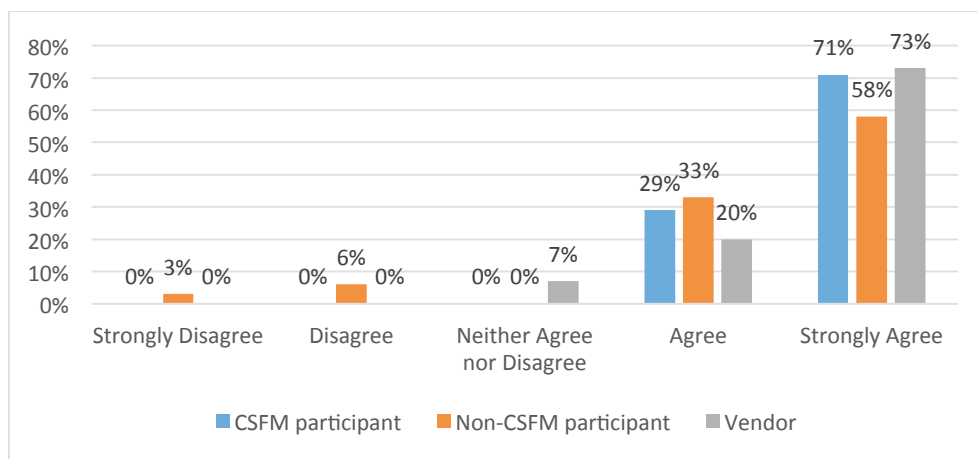


\*For this question, respondents could select more than one answer. The third category should read “I am doing it to stay competitive with other vendors”. The fourth category should read “It attracts more people to the whole market”.

### Reciprocity and Mutuality

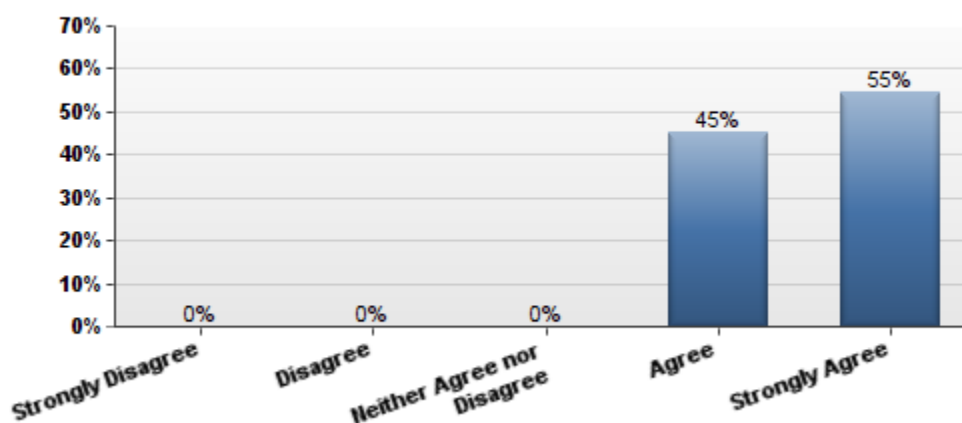
All groups seem to believe that making local food accessible to all is important for our community, with 93% of vendors, 91% of non-CSFM participants, and 100% of CSFM participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement as seen in Figure 5. There is a slight percentage difference between the CSFM and non-CSFM responses, suggesting that those who participate in the program are slightly more likely to believe in the importance of local food access for all, though the percentage difference is small and perhaps negligible. Overall, there definitely seems to be concern for the wellbeing of all present in the CSFM program on both the participant and vendor end, indicating reciprocity and mutuality and consequently, social capital.

Figure 5- Response to access to local food for all is important for our community



As Figure 6 illustrates, all of the CSFM participants surveyed agree or strongly agree with the idea that their participation in the program is supporting the farmers. This indicates that they may have an understanding that through buying local food, they are participating in a transaction that has quite tangible consequences for both parties; the participant receives local food and the vendor gets the business that she or he needs to maintain her or his livelihood. This sense of mutuality is an indicator of social capital, though it may be an incomplete picture.

Figure 6- Response rate to belief that participation in the CSFM program is helping the farmers



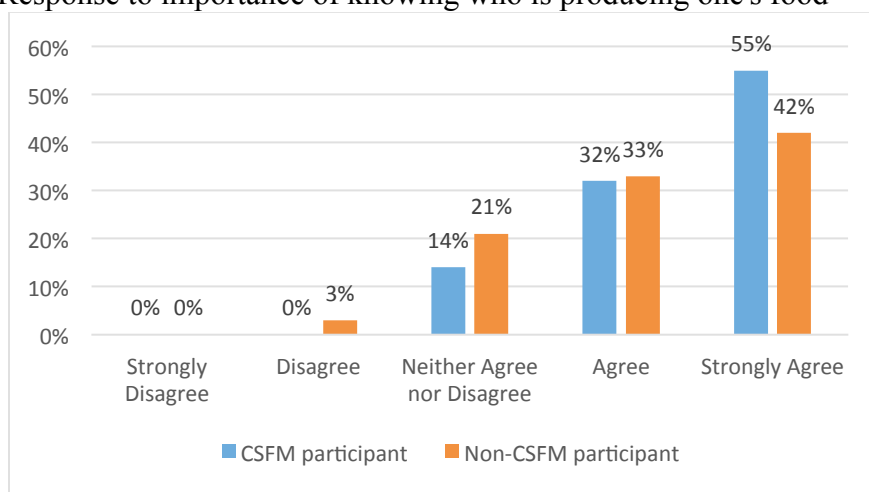
For Figure 6 only reflects the answers of CSFM participants. There was no question to garner a comparable sense of mutuality from the vendors. This is a clear short

coming of the survey for this indicator and if the sense of mutuality were to be further supported and rebutted, the vendors need to be specifically surveyed with a comparable question to the one given to the CSFM participants.

### Loyalty and Connection

A sense of loyalty and connection is a key component to forming networks of social capital and the data in Figure 7 suggests that those in the CSFM program have a greater sense of connection to vendors than those who are not in the program. Eighty seven percent of CSFM participants agreed or strongly agreed that it was important to know who produced your food while 75% of those who didn't participate responded in the same way. This suggests that those who have participated in the program desire the connection to their food source to a greater extent than those who haven't participated.

Figure 7- Response to importance of knowing who is producing one's food



As seen in Figure 8, roughly one-third of CSFM participants spent more than 40 minutes at the market as a whole. Nearly half reported spending almost half that time, 10-20 minutes, talking to farmers and 50% said they spent 10-20 talking to friends they saw



at the market. Two-thirds of vendors reported spending 1-5 minutes talking per person with their SNAP customers, showing that despite market bustle, they take the time to chat with their consumers for a few minutes to chat. This data provides significant evidence that CSFM participants are connecting with the vendors they buy from. Comparatively, Figure 9 shows only roughly a quarter of those who were not CSFM participants responded that they knew a farmer and market vendor. CSFM participants are clearly doing more than just shopping; they are taking the time to talk to the person whom produced the food they are purchasing, forming relationships that can help lay the foundation of social capital and solidarity.

Figure 8- Average time CSFM participants spent at farmers' markets

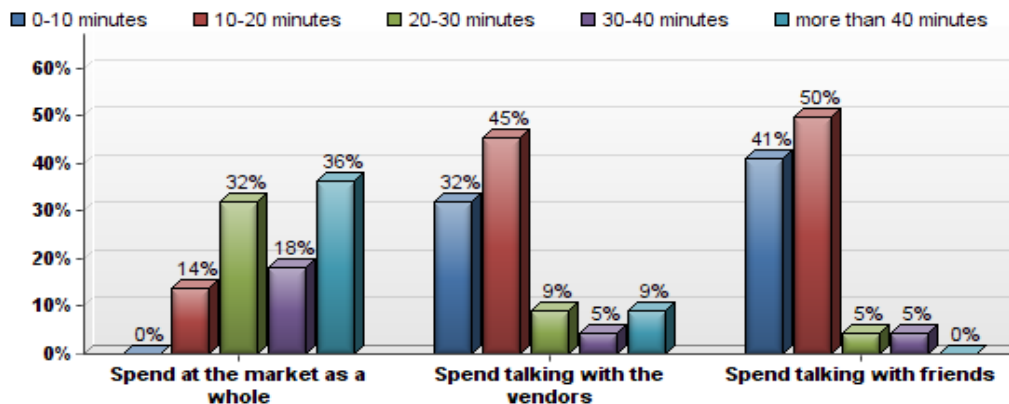
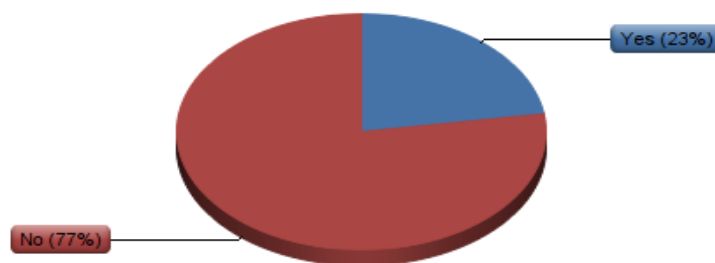


Figure 9- Non-CSFM responses if they knew a market vendor

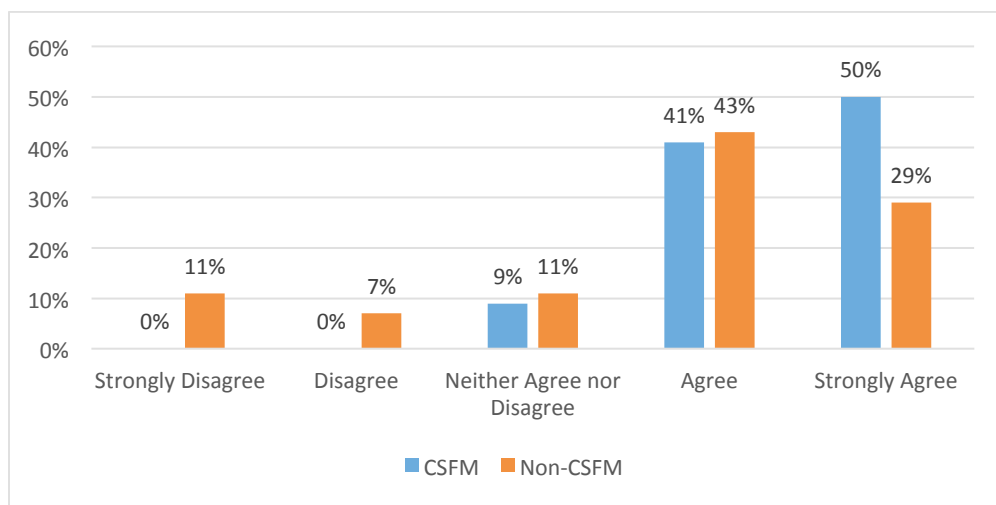


A significant barrier to forming connection and loyalty can be negative perceptions. Stigma can be a huge issue with SNAP as many have negative views of those who receive federal benefits. However, all vendors surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked if their perception of the SNAP customers negatively impacted their interactions with those customers. Additionally, 13% of the vendors said their perceptions had improved since participating in the CSFM program, the remaining saying the perceptions had stayed the same.

On the part of the participants, 90% said they agree or strongly agree when asked if they feel comfortable using their SNAP benefits at the farmers' market. Only 72% of

those who had not participated in the CSFM program felt the same way as shown in Figure 10. This would suggest that those who have participated in the CSFM program do not feel stigmatized for using their SNAP benefits at the farmers market. Thus, for both vendors and CSFM participants, stigma does not seem to be impeding connection.

Figure 10- Response to feeling comfortable using SNAP benefits at the farmers' market



However, procuring honest answers regarding a sensitive topic such as stigma can be a difficult task. Though the surveys are anonymous, the majority of the surveys were conducted over the phone and the vendor would have to answer out loud to the question. Vendors may not want to appear prejudice while participants may not answer completely because of, ironically, the same stigma the question is attempting to test for. Thus, for both vendors and participants, the answers given for these questions may not be the most reliable.

## Inclusion

It is important for individuals to feel included in the networks of social capital that are being built. In this case, that would mean that the sample groups feel that the local

food movement and the CSFM program itself are inclusive of their needs and perspective. The above discussion surrounding stigma is just as relevant in this section as in the section on connection. If an individual is experiencing stigma because of judgment or prejudice, it is unlikely they will feel included. Since this data suggests that stigma is not an issue, it seems that the CSFM participants feel included in the farmers markets.

Those who have participated in the CSFM program also show feelings of inclusion by expressing belief that the CSFM program has helped improve their ability to control their food choices as reflected in Figure 11. Ninety five percent of respondents agreed with this statement, showing that they not only feel included, but empowered to make food choices within the local food movement. The vendors also reflect control and inclusion within the program. Figure 12 shows that 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with having the ability to impact the future of the CSFM program.

Figure 11- Response of CSFM participants to belief that CSFM program has improved ability to control food choices

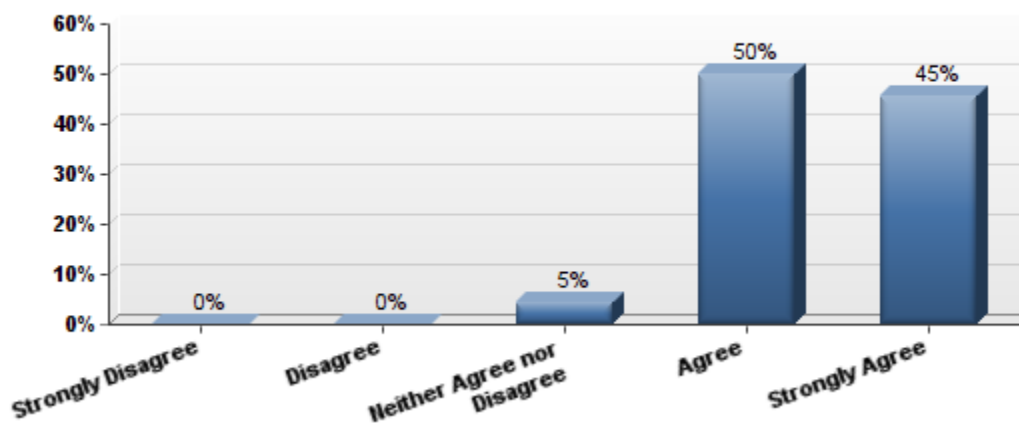
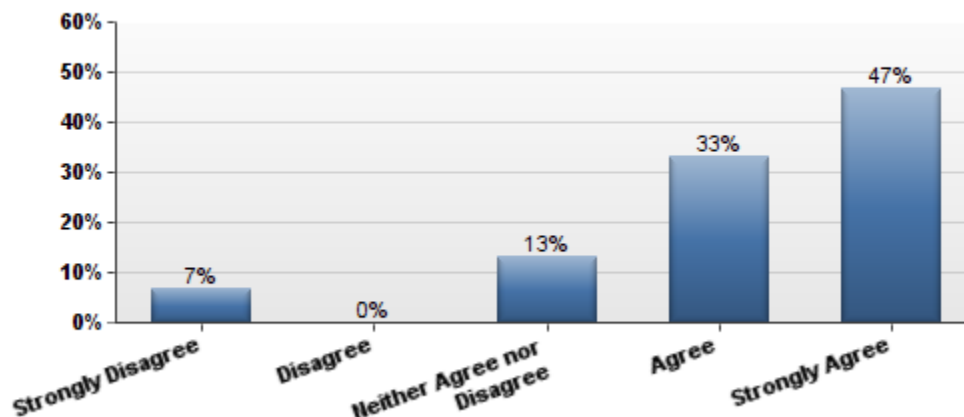


Figure 12- Response of vendors to their ability to impact the future of the CSFM program



### Social Relationships

The survey also attempts to gauge the value of social relationships, especially in comparison to economic incentive. Non-CSFM respondents were asked at what discount amount they would shop at the farmers' markets. As Figure 13 suggests, there seems to be some slight economic incentive to participate with the higher discount amount as the numbers reflect the most agreement at the 50% discount amount and lessening agreement as the discount become smaller. This is a fairly weak trend though and thus may not be of the much significance. Additionally, questions were asked about changes in the frequency of market attendance as well as amount purchased for CSFM participants if the discount were to decrease. However, these questions did not yield any conclusive results as seen in Figure 14 and Figure 15. This may be due to the wording of the question, which respondents may have found confusing.

Figure 13- Response of Non-CSFM respondents to likelihood of shopping at the market at 50%, 40%, and 25% discount rates

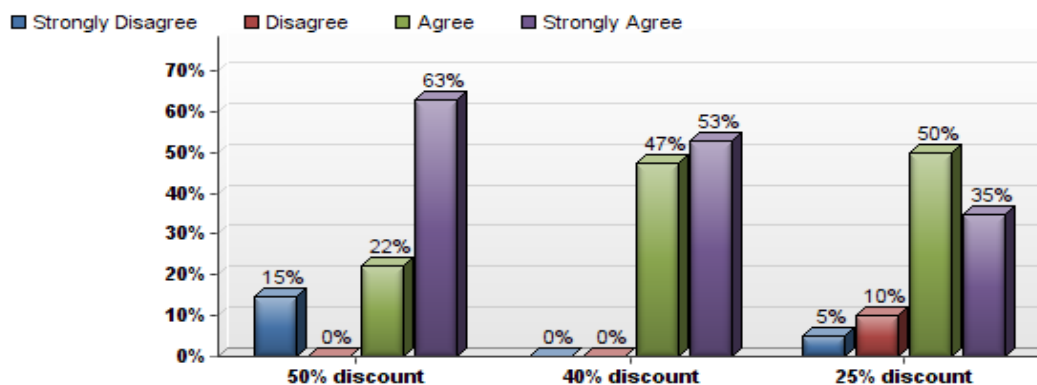


Figure 14- Response of CSFM participants to the amount they spend at the market changing if the discount were to be reduced to 40% and 25%

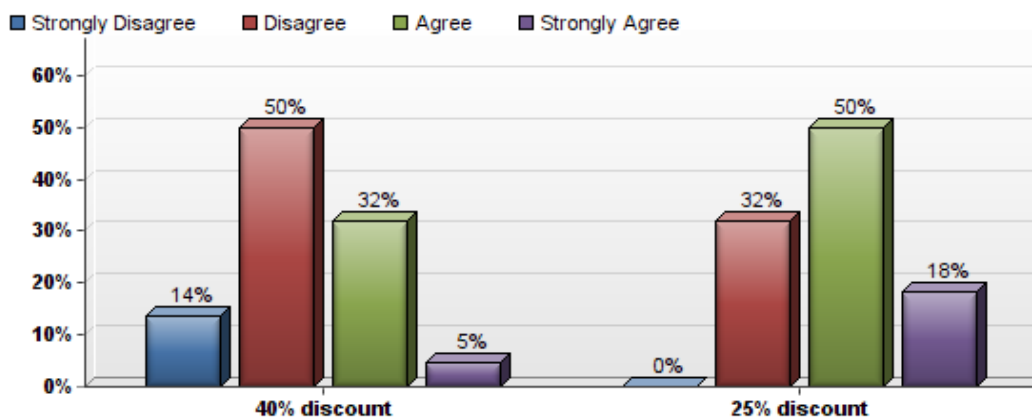
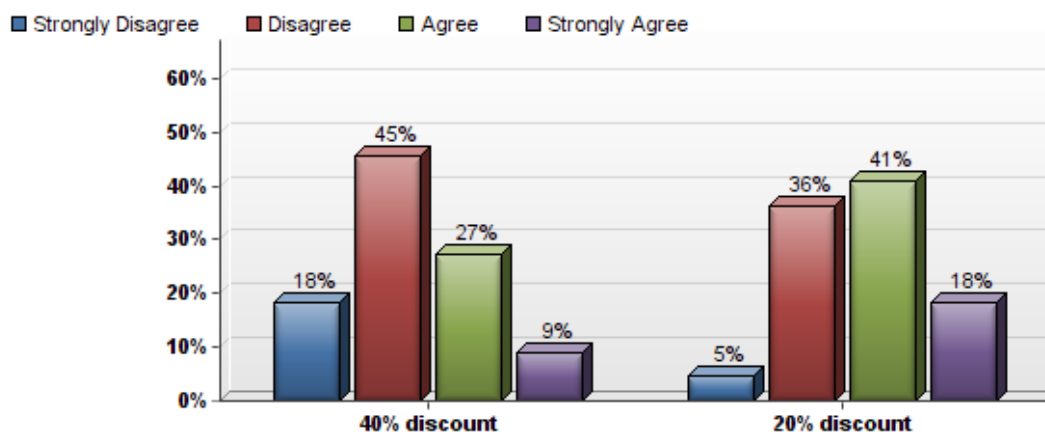


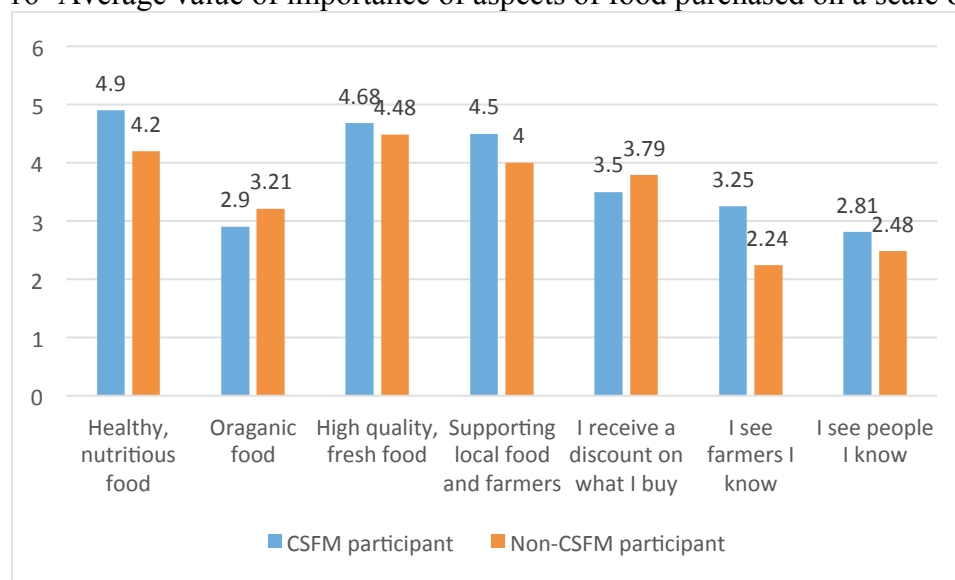
Figure 15- Response of CSFM participants to likelihood of their frequency of market attendance changing if the discount were to change to 40% or 20%



\*The 20% discount should have been 25% discount, but this error was not caught until after the survey had been launched.

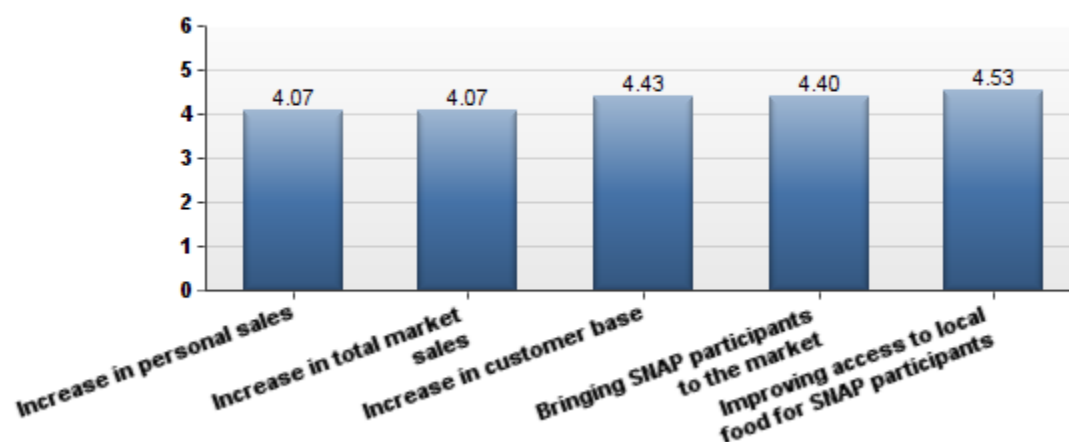
Figure 16 compares the different aspects of food purchased based on respondents' ranking of aspect on a scale of 1 to 5. For CSFM participants, supporting local food and local farmers is a full point more important than receiving a discount on the food they buy, suggesting this social factor could play more of a role in food purchasing decisions than the economic discount factor. The other social factors of seeing farmers and people the person knows do not rank quite as high as the economic discount factor however, suggesting there is still importance to the economic factors for people in comparison with the social. It is important to note the difference between the importance of seeing farmers the person knows for CSFM and non-CSFM respondents. As CSFM respondents placed greater importance on seeing farmers compared to those who hadn't participated in the program, it would suggest that the program has had an effect on the connection between the vendor and the CSFM participants, as discussed in the loyalty and connection section.

Figure 16- Average value of importance of aspects of food purchased on a scale of 1-5



A comparable question was asked of the vendors, as respondents ranked different factors on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of how much these factors motivated them to participate in the program. As Figure 13 shows, the average values for the different factors, both economic and social, are all roughly the same. Though bringing SNAP recipients to the market and providing a discount for that sample group are both slightly higher than the rest of the factors, though this is a slight margin.

Figure 17- Average value of degree of motivation of vendors to participate in the CSFM for different factors



#### Non-CSFM participants attending and not attending the market

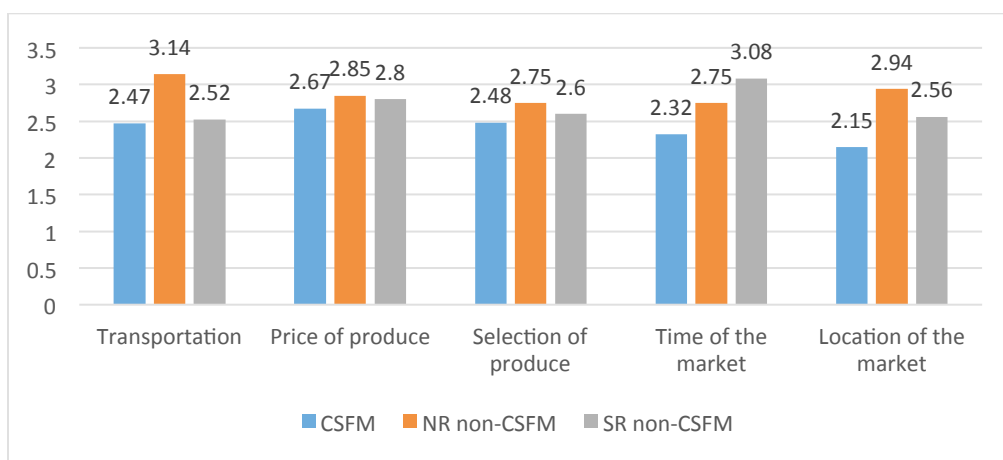
Breaking down the non-CSFM participants by attendance at the farmers market can provide additional relevant findings. These respondents will be broken into two groups, those who had attended the market never or rarely (indicated by the abbreviation NR) and those who had attended the market sometimes or often (indicated by the abbreviation SO; no respondents said they attended all the time so this answer will not be included in the discussion). Thus there will be two groups, NR non-CSFM participants,



and SO non-CSFM participants, discussed in this section compared to the CSFM participants.

Of the 33 non-CSFM participants, 18 had attended the market never or rarely, while 13 had attended sometimes or often. This shows that more of the non-CSFM participants had hardly attended the market than regularly did. This divide especially in relation to the CSFM participants was relevant in several of the survey questions with implications for the social capital indicators. As seen in Figure 18, there are some percentage difference between the three groups when looking at the factors that affect one's ability to attend the market. With the exception of time of the market, CSFM and SO non-CSFM participants have similar average values especially in comparison to NR non-CSFM participants. This maps into the social capital indicator of participation, suggesting that CSFM and SR non-CSFM participants have similar abilities to participate.

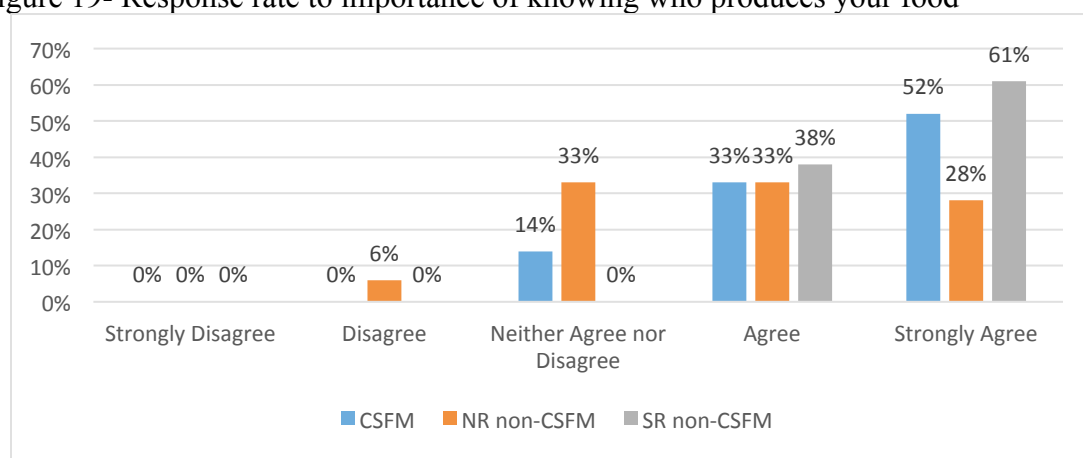
Figure 18- Factors affecting ability or desire to attend the farmers' market on a scale of 1 to 5



Another interesting point of discussion looking at this break down is shown in Figure 19. Ninety nine percent of SO non-CSFM participants agree or strongly agree it is important to know who produces your food compared to 85% of CSFM participants and

61% of NR non-CSFM participants. Relating this to the social capital indicator of connection, this would seem to suggest that SO non-CSFM participants have a very high degree of connection to their food source, especially in comparison to NR non-CSFM participants. There is even a percentage difference of 14% between SO non-CSFM participants and CSFM participants, which would mean that the former has a stronger connection to the source of their food than the latter.

Figure 19- Response rate to importance of knowing who produces your food



SO non-CSFM participants either agreed or strongly agreed slightly more with the importance of local food to the community than NR non-CSFM participants with 94% and 84% response rate respectively. Both of these is less than the CSFM participants who 100% agreed or strongly agreed with the importance of local food for the community, as reflected in Figure 20.

Figure 20- Response to importance of access to local food for the community

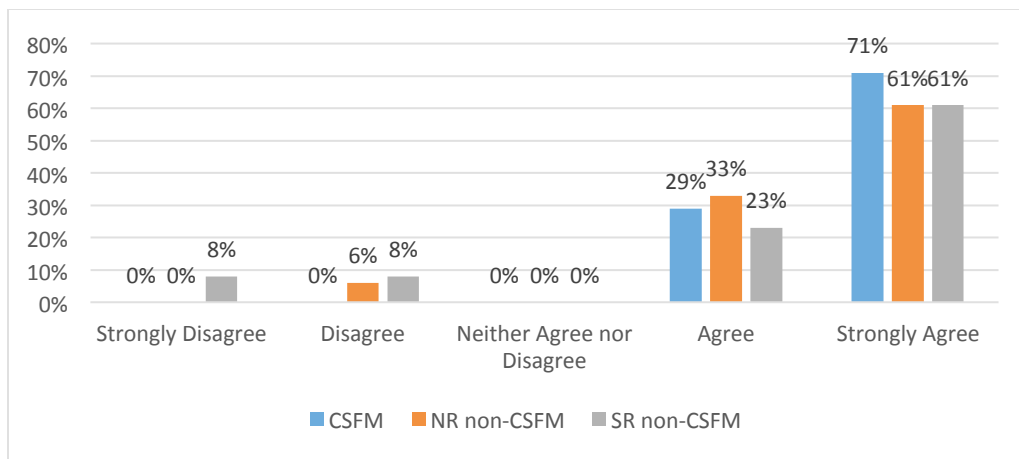
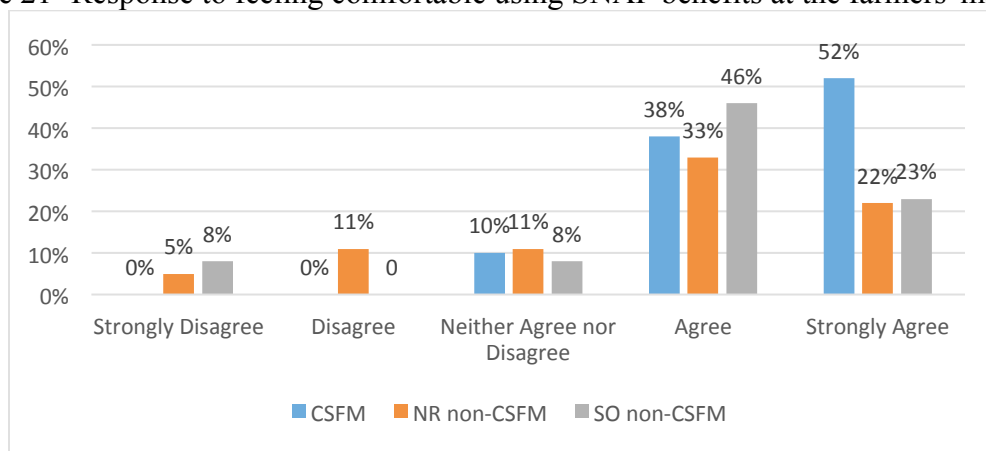


Figure 21 shows that those who had participated in the CSFM program were much more likely to feel comfortable using their SNAP benefits at the farmers' market than both groups of non-CSFM participants as 90% agreed or strongly agreed to feeling comfortable doing so at the market while 69% of SO non-CSFM and 55% of NR non-CSFM responded the same. As discussed previously, stigma can affect both the social capital indicators of loyalty and connection as well as inclusion. Thus, it would seem that CSFM and to a slightly lesser but positive extent SO non-CSFM participants do not have stigma as a barrier to these two indicators.

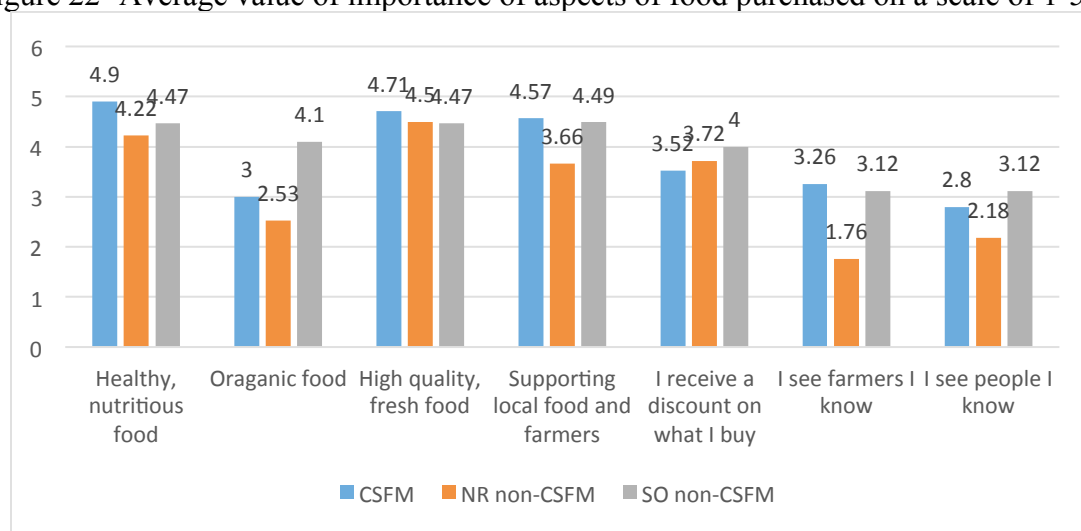
Figure 21- Response to feeling comfortable using SNAP benefits at the farmers' market



Finally, the difference between NR non-CSFM and SO non-CSFM in comparison to CSFM is notable when looking at the importance of varying aspects of food purchases

as indicated in Figure 22. For the three aspects of food purchases that relate to the social aspect of these transactions, supporting local food and farmers, seeing people I know, and seeing farmers I know, CSFM participants and SO non-CSFM participants all responded with similar levels importance with only at most a .22 scale point difference between the two of them for these three categories. Seeing farmers the person knows was much less for NR non-CSFM participants than the other two groups with a 1.5 scale point difference between the two, the largest difference in any of those three categories. This indicates that there the social capital indicator of social relationships is most important for the CSFM and SO non-CSFM participants. Though it is important to note, the group which placed the greatest importance on the market based category which asks about the importance of receiving a discount on purchases was the SO non-CSFM participant group.

Figure 22- Average value of importance of aspects of food purchased on a scale of 1-5



## CHAPTER 9: Analysis

This study sought to identify the formation of community within the CSFM program using the framework of the solidarity economy and the measure of social capital to quantify that community using the indicators of participation, mutuality and reciprocity, loyalty and connection, inclusion, and social relationships. Evaluating the previously discussed results, there appears to be evidence to support the formation of this community.

In terms of participation, we see how respondents attended the market more frequently after participating in the CSFM program. Especially compared to the majority of non-CSFM participants who rarely or never attended the market, it would appear that the SNAP discount program has some bearing on a person's participation, a participation that helps to build networks of social capital and community. CSFM participants also reported that potential barriers such as transportation and time and location of the market affected their ability somewhat, but less than those who did not participate in the CSFM program. Though it cannot be said that the CSFM program is directly the cause of this lessening of barriers, there is at least the potential for smaller impact of barriers to participation for those who participate than those who do not, further supporting the presence of social capital. Vendors demonstrated similar levels of active participation in the CSFM program by indicating the responses it is an important program to offer, it brings more people to the market, and that it would be good for business as the most relevant to their reasons for participating in the CSFM program. Thus all sample groups demonstrate levels of participation that support the presence of social capital and the community it forms.

Mutuality and reciprocity are similarly supported by the results, as all three sample groups show concern for the well-being of all by agreeing or strongly agreeing that access to local food for all is important for the community. Additionally, all of the CSFM participants agree or strongly agree that their participation in the program is supporting the farmers, meaning they are aware of the reciprocity of their action. As noted in the findings and discussion section, there is no similar question to gauge the sense of mutuality from the vendors, but the evidence that is provided by the survey responses suggests that there is a sense of mutuality and reciprocity, indicating community being built through social capital.

There was also positive indication of loyalty and connection for the CSFM participants as compared to the non-CSFM participants as more of the participants agreed with the importance of knowing who produced their food than non-participants, meaning that the CSFM program is playing some role in connecting people to their food source. The same trend is reflected in the amount of time CSFM participants spend talking to friends and vendors they know at the market and by the amount of time vendors spend talking to their SNAP customers. On both sides, there is conversation and connection occurring, which helps to cultivate solidarity and build community.

Stigma is an issue relevant to both this indicator of connection as well as the next indicator of inclusion. As previously discussed, stigma does not appear to significantly impact the CSFM participants comfort level at the market, especially in comparison to non-CSFM participants, suggesting it is not a barrier to their participation and that the program may be related to this lack of barrier. Knowing that stigma is not an issue for participants is important because farmers' markets have been criticized for being elite

place only accessible by those of higher socioeconomic status. Making SNAP participants feel connected to and included in local food movement and at farmers' markets is a way to combat this elitism by making everyone regardless of socioeconomic status comfortable at the markets.

Feelings of inclusion are also reflected in CSFM participants' positive responses to the CSFM program improving their ability to control their food choices, as this control suggests that they are actively engaging in the farmers market setting and feel included in the broader food movement that fuels the presence of that market. Since vendors also reflect similar feelings of inclusion by indicating they feel they can impact the future of the CSFM program, the inclusion indicator of social capital is supported by the data.

Lastly, social relationships also seem to be of importance to CSFM participants compared to non-CSFM participants, as participants ranked seeing people and seeing farmers they knew higher than non-participants when asked about the importance of different aspect of food purchased. The vendors' responses reflected similar importance as they ranked social motivations such as improving access to local food for SNAP participants slightly higher than other motivations for participating in the program. Thus social relationships are clearly valued among the CSFM stakeholders, which further supports the presence of social capital as a foundation for community within the CSFM program.

In conclusion, the data supports the presence of social capital, as discussed within the framework of the solidarity economy, which indicates the formation of community. However, looking at the results of breaking down the non-CSFM participants by

frequency of attendance at the markets provides an important point to analyze further. In the majority of the questions discussed, the SO non-CSFM (who attended sometimes or often) had very similar response rates to the CSFM participants compared to the NR non-CSFM (who attended never or rarely). This would suggest that the CSFM program itself may not be the deciding factor if those who had never participated answered similarly to those who had. It may be attendance at the markets that provides a more accurate prediction of social capital and community as opposed to participation in the program. The sample sizes for this study are small and thus it is hard to discern that for certain from this data, though it is a possible conclusion and should be studied at greater length to be able to tease out the difference between the CSFM participation and attendance of farmers' markets as influences of social capital.

To supplement this analysis, preliminary data from a state wide survey conducted by the Maine Food Strategy steering committee will also be discussed, as much of the results pertaining to local food and community are relevant to this study and provide a glimpse at a similar study with much larger sample groups. The survey asked questions about all outlets of local food including chain grocery stores and community supported agriculture shares, so it is important to indicate that just 54% of those respondents indicated they purchased the majority of their food at farmers' markets and it impossible to isolate just those who responded in that way. However, there is still useful and insightful information about the mentality of people in the state of Maine regarding their food purchases.

The respondents were asked about the importance of varying factors when they purchased food on a scale of 1 to 10. Seventy two percent of respondents rated local with



a seven or higher and just over half ranked knowing who produced or caught the food the same. This clearly shows buying local is important to the majority of the respondents. Cost was also ranked as part of the same question and 78% rated cost with a seven or higher while 25% said cost prohibited them from buying more local food than they do, showing that respondents' food purchasing decisions are also affected by economic factors.

Several questions towards the end of the survey directly relate to the social capital and solidarity economy indicators. Keeping money in the local economy means supporting local producers and 80 % of respondents ranked this factor with a seven or higher for importance in their food purchasing decisions. Forty six percent ranked being able to talk to farmers and fishermen seven or higher and 80% trust in local farmers and fishermen for the same question. Lastly, 58% of respondents ranked the social environment of the farmers markets seven or higher for the same question (Maine Food Strategy, 2014). These four questions show that across the state, these social dimensions to the economy seen in the mutuality of supporting the local economy and the connection of conversation with and trust in the producers are important and further support the presence of social capital and the solidarity economy. This preliminary data suggests that Mainers believe farmers markets are social places and the reasons they make their food purchasing decisions cultivates the social capital and community potential of these social spaces.

The findings from this data further supports the need for another research project to study the difference between the effects of the CSFM program and the farmers'

markets in general. Regardless of cause however, social capital is present and important to food consumers in the state of Maine.

## CHAPTER 10: Sources of Error and Recommendations for the Future

This section will discuss some potential sources of error in the surveys or data as well as some ways the study could have been conducted different or improved upon for the future. As previously discussed, it is difficult to solicit honest responses to sensitive or stigmatized topics such as SNAP participation. The questions that were asked in this survey attempted to gauge this sensitive topic but may have done an insufficient job in measuring the sense of stigma due to wording and/or having to answer to out loud to the question. This is an important topic to investigate in regards to the solidarity economy because of the barrier it poses to inclusion and connection. Any study done in the future dealing with the stigma surrounding SNAP should give the questions on this topic serious consideration. Researching how other studies that attempt to measure stigma structure their questions and survey procedures would be beneficial before constructing any new study.

There were some additional issues with the wording of questions, particularly in regards to gauging the affect a change in the market discount amount would affect the amount of money spent as well frequency of market attendance for CSFM participants. This question was an attempt to measure the significance of the economic discount for participants and their loyalty to the program regardless of a changing discount. Additional wording clarification may also be needed for on the question “it is important for me to know who produces my food”. “Know” could mean know personally or know the origin of. The later association is a more desirable response and the question should be worded to more accurately encompass this.

Another major flaw in the survey construction and implementation is the lack of data for market vendors who did not participate in the program. SNAP beneficiaries who had not participated in the CSFM program were surveyed as a control for those who had participate, but no corresponding control group was surveyed for the market vendors. Having this additional control group may provide more insight into how relative the levels of social capital found in this study are compared to with vendors who had not participated in the CSFM program. Because there was not control group for the vendors, it is hard to say if the CSFM program and social capital is merely a correlation or causation. Any future study on the CSFM program should definitely survey this additional group to obtain a better understanding of the points discussed above. Additionally, the sample groups were non-random. Many of the CSFM participants who responded were already affiliated to Food and Medicine, which biases their responses. A future study on this topic should ensure more random participation and less bias by surveying people not already associated with FAM.

The most obvious and unfortunate sources of error in this study is the small sample sizes. It was difficult to get a hold of the target populations, especially since the market was not in session while the research was being conducted. Time was an additional constraint in terms of going to the food cupboards and markets as well as doing phone calls and follow up calls. More time needs to be allocated for obtaining sufficient numbers for each population group. As mentioned, many of those who were surveyed as CSFM participants were already heavily involved with FAM and may be biased towards the program. If more time was put into finding good sample populations, these biases could be avoided and a more diverse section of the population could be

studied. Additionally, it would be helpful to have multiple investigators, especially if an additional control group is added like suggested above. This would allow for more terrain to be covered and more people in each population group to be surveyed.

It may also be beneficial for future studies to approach this topic using a mixed methods approach by incorporating qualitative interviews into the research process. Quantitative data like that collected from the surveys is good for illustrating generalizable trends and identifying statistically significant information; however, is a broad survey of the sample groups and does not provide much depth. This research is identifying and analyzing social qualities and relationships, multifaceted and complicated topics which better lend themselves to open ended and follow up questions as opposed to brief survey questions. Conducting one-on-one interviews lasting at least twenty minutes with respondents from all the sample groups would allow for a better understanding of context and reasoning that would bring some of the previous discussed findings to life and answer many of the “why” questions that cannot be answered in a brief survey. The interview questions could be constructed in a way that may help to tease out the difference between the influence of the farmers’ market and the influence of the CSFM program in terms of social capital and community.

These interviews would be much more demanding on the part of the participant and investigator in terms of time commitment and attracting people to participate in the interview may be more challenging. Thus, it may be advantageous to include compensation, perhaps related to local food, for participants if interviews were incorporated into future research. A small incentive such as inclusion in a raffle for a large prize such as a CSA or small vouchers to be used at a farmers’ market may help

increase people's willingness to participate in the program and also further opportunities for respondents to connect with local food. Such incentives would require funding as well as approval from Internal Review Board (IRB), but almost certainly be worth the hassle to ensure strong response rates.

Lastly, this section will close with a discussion of participatory action research (PAR) as a potential avenue of further research. This study operated on the philosophy of action research and in many ways did so by working with an organization in the community address needs and concerns in that community; however, those with leadership positions in that organization were the only ones who were consulted during this process. Participatory action research would take it a step further in incorporate the voices of community stakeholders at all levels and from all areas. Operating on the belief that people's experiences are a legitimate source of knowledge, these stakeholders would guide the purpose and the direction of the study based on their experiences and using their resources as equal partners with the investigator. PAR is meant to enact change as researchers and stakeholders collect and analyze data, which then dictates the best action to be taken (MacDonald, 2012; Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006).

Conceptualizing a research framework for this project using this PAR model is difficult but possible with some creative planning and outreach. Food and Medicine (FAM) has organized a Food Access Committee, which brings together people in the Bangor area who have all at one time received or are currently receiving SNAP benefits. Involving this committee could provide additional and more diverse voices to the research projects understanding and direction. To tap into the experience and knowledge of folks who are not affiliated with FAM, outreach could be done at local food pantries or

at other venues that serve those who receive SNAP benefits. It would also be necessary to involve vendors and market administration. Farmers' markets have annual meetings of vendors and staff which could be tied into the research process. Following a PAR model of for future research would provide an even more organic and holistic understanding of the markets as the purpose of the research would reflect the needs, knowledge, and experience of all those involved and is something to seriously consider in the true spirit of solidarity.

## CHAPTER 11: Conclusion

As demonstrated in the previous sections, there is sufficient evidence to suggest the presence of social capital within the CSFM program. However, the fact that the samples surveyed were small in number makes the generalizability of this statement questionable at best. Further research with similar objectives and larger studied populations would need to be done to further these findings and support the presence or lack of the solidarity economy.

Operating on the assumption that there is to at least some extent the formation of the solidarity economy present at the farmers market, this has positive implications for the future of the program. The social relationships that are being formed thanks to the solidarity economy are the basis for the community that Food and Medicine wants to create to ensure the sustainability of the program. Knowing that there is connection, loyalty, and feelings of inclusion addresses the concerns expressed by Food and Medicine in regards to what is being incentivized by the program. It is clear that there is some social foundation being built within the program and that people are connecting with more than just the discount and monetary business of it all.

That being said, an important conclusion that can be broadly drawn from the data is the importance of both market and non-market factors for people's economic transactions and decisions. As discussed in the literature, social embeddedness and marketness are not mutually exclusive in the economic sphere. It is possible for people to place equal importance on making smart financial decisions and on supporting producers with whom they have established social relationships. Both the motivation and the behavior of a consumer or producer can reflect varying levels of market and non-market



factors, as seen with some of the farmers' markets looked at in this study and with the CSFM program findings. Vendors were concerned with getting local food to SNAP recipients, but they were also interested in increasing personal sales and making smart business decisions. CSFM participants were interested in supporting local food and farmers, but also valued receiving a discount on what they buy. The preliminary data from the statewide survey showed that Mainers place high value on local food but are also concerned with the monetary costs associated with that food. This makes sense and framing the presence of the solidarity economy as existing along with more market and monetary based economic frameworks accepts both kinds of transactions as valid and productive.

Programs like Community Supported Farmers' Markets help to bridge the critical gap in the local food movement by improving food access for those who receive SNAP benefits. Understanding the economic motivations, behaviors, and structures of these programs can provide key indicators of community. This study provided one small piece of that picture and with improvements and further research, both the social and market factors that shape the economic lives of all stakeholders can be understood in a way that works towards sustainable, just and community centered food systems.

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## APPENDIX A- Surveys

**CSFM Participants**

1. How often did you visit the farmers' market?

	Never	Once or twice a year	Once a month	2 or 3 times a month	More than 3 times a month
Before market discount program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a participant in the market discount program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. On a scale from 1 to 5 how much does each of these factors affect your ability or desire to go to the farmers' markets? 1=not at all, 5=very much

Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Price of produce	1	2	3	4	5
Selection of produce and goods	1	2	3	4	5
Time of the market	1	2	3	4	5
Location of the market	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

3. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe my participation in the market discount program is helping the farmers

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Making local food more accessible (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers market, etc) for all is important for our community

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Having access (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers markets, etc) to local food is important to me

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

6. Each time you go to the market, on average, how long do you:

	0-10 minutes	10-20 minutes	20-30 minutes	30-40 minutes	more than 40 minutes
Spend at the market as a whole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spend talking with the vendors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spend talking with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The market discount program has changed the kinds of food I buy.

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It important for me to know who produces my food.

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel comfortable using my SNAP benefits at the farmers market.

- Strongly Disagree                       Agree  
 Disagree                                       Strongly Agree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The amount of money I spend at the market would change if the discount were to be reduced from 50% to the following discounts:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
40% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*\*DISCLAIMER: This question will not influence actual discount amount

11. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: How often I come to the market would change if the discount were to be reduced from 50% to the following discounts:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
40% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*\*DISCLAIMER: This question will not influence actual discount amount

12. Why do you choose to come to the market? Rank each of these items on a scale from 1 to 5, 1=not important at all 5=very important

Healthy, nutritious options	1	2	3	4	5
Organic options	1	2	3	4	5
High quality, fresh options	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting local food and farmers	1	2	3	4	5
I receive a discount on what I buy	1	2	3	4	5
I see farmers I know	1	2	3	4	5
I see people I know	1	2	3	4	5

### Non-CSFM Participants

1. Have you heard of the Community Supported Farmer's Market Program, a program that provides a discount to SNAP users at farmer's markets?

- Yes  
 No

2. How often have you attended the Bangor, Brewer, or Ohio St farmers' market?

- Never  
 Rarely  
 Sometimes  
 Often  
 All of the Time  
 I didn't know they existed

3. On a scale from 1 to 5 how much does each of these factors affect your ability or desire to go to the farmers' markets? 1=not at all, 5=very much

Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Price of produce	1	2	3	4	5
Selection of produce and goods	1	2	3	4	5
Time of the market	1	2	3	4	5
Location of the market	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Is it important for me to know who produces my food.

- Strongly Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 Agree  
 Strongly Agree

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Making local food more accessible (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers market, etc) for all is important for our community

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Having access (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers markets, etc) to local food is important to me

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7. Do you know a farmer or market vendor?

- Yes
- No

8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would feel comfortable using my SNAP benefits at a farmers market

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would shop at the markets if the discount were the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
50% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25% discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*Disclaimer: This question will not influence the actual discount amount.

10. Thinking about the food you eat, rank each of these items on a scale from 1 to 5, 1=not important at all 5=very important

Healthy, nutritious options	1	2	3	4	5
Organic options	1	2	3	4	5
High quality, fresh options	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting local food and farmers	1	2	3	4	5
I receive a discount on what I buy	1	2	3	4	5
I see farmers I know	1	2	3	4	5
I see people I know	1	2	3	4	5

## Vendors

1. At which market do you participate?

- Bangor
- Ohio St.
- Brewer
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why did you become involved with the SNAP discount program? Select all that apply

- I think it's an important program to offer
- I thought it would be good for business
- I am doing it to stay competitive with other vendors
- It attracts more people to the whole market
- I am obligated to do it because of market rules
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I think the SNAP discount program is important as a vendor.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Making local food more accessible (in terms of price, transportation, location and time of farmers market, etc) for all is important for our community

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am comfortable interacting with the SNAP customers

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



6. On average, how long per person do you spend talking to your SNAP customers on a given market day?

- 0-15 seconds
- 15-30 seconds
- 30 seconds to 1 minute
- 1-5 minutes
- more than 5 minutes

7. How has your perception of the SNAP customers changed since you've been participating in this program?

- My perceptions have improved
- My perceptions have stayed the same
- My perceptions have become worse

8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: My perceptions negatively impact my interactions with SNAP customers

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel like I can impact the future of the market discount program

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. Rank your motivations for participating in the SNAP discount program on a scale from 1 to 5, 1=not motivating at all and 5= very motivating

- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase in personal sales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase in total market sales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increase in customer base
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bringing SNAP participants to the market
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improving access to local food for SNAP participants

APPENDIX B- IRB approval

**(KEEP THIS PAGE AS ONE PAGE – DO NOT CHANGE MARGINS/FONTS!!!!!!!!!!)**

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
 Protection of Human Subjects Review Board, 114 Alumni Hall, 581-1498

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Shannon Brenner  
 EMAIL: shannon.brener@umit.maine.edu TELEPHONE: 207 713 5844  
 CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): N/A  
 FACULTY SPONSOR (Required if PI is a student): Mark Haggerty, John Jemison  
 TITLE OF PROJECT: Community Supported Farmers' Market's SNAP Discount Research and Evaluation

START DATE: Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 2014 3/14/14 PI DEPARTMENT: Sociology  
 MAILING ADDRESS: 37 Pond St Orono, ME 04473  
 FUNDING AGENCY (if any):  
 STATUS OF PI:

FACULTY/STAFF/GRADUATE/UNDERGRADUATE

1. If PI is a student, is this research to be performed:
 

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> for an honors thesis/senior thesis/capstone? <input type="checkbox"/> for a doctoral dissertation? <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> for a master's thesis? <input type="checkbox"/> for a course project?
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2. Does this application modify a previously approved project? (Y/N). If yes, please give assigned number (if known) of previously approved project: NO
  
3. Is an expedited review requested? NO (Y/N).

**SIGNATURES:** All procedures performed under the project will be conducted by individuals qualified and legally entitled to do so. No deviation from the approved protocol will be undertaken without prior approval of the IRB.

Faculty Sponsors are responsible for oversight of research conducted by their students. By signing this application page, the Faculty Sponsor ensures that he/she has read the application and that the conduct of such research will be in accordance with the University of Maine's *Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*.

Date	Principal Investigator	Faculty Sponsor
	Co-Investigator	Co-Investigator

\*\*\*\*\*  
 FOR IRB USE ONLY Application # 2014-02-13 Date received 2/26/14 Review (F/E): E  
 Expedited Category: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION TAKEN:**

X Judged Exempt; category 2. Modifications required? Y (Y/N) Accepted (date) 3/12/14  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Approved as submitted. Date of next review: by \_\_\_\_\_ . Degree of Risk: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Approved pending modifications. Date of next review: by \_\_\_\_\_ . Degree of Risk: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Modifications accepted (date): \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Not approved. (See attached statement.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Judged not research with human subjects

Date: 3/7/14 Chair's Signature: Cynthia A. Erdley 12/2012

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Shannon Brenner graduated with a major in Sociology with a concentration in race, class, and gender, and with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. A native of Maine, she hopes to stay in the state in the future. Brenner stumbled upon the topic of local food during her time at the University of Maine and found a strong passion in applying a sociological lens to food systems and agriculture in the state of Maine, as reflected by the topic of this thesis.

Brenner worked on an organic farm in Maine directly after graduating to further her understanding of the actual practice of growing food as well as to see firsthand examples of farm/community relationships. From there, she hopes to continue to do work surrounding local agriculture with a practical emphasis on issues of food access and inclusive, community centered food systems. In addition to playing in the dirt and local food, Brenner also enjoys yoga, tea, and a good walk in the woods to find peace and connection to the world.