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Community Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By
Connie J. Everson

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

2014

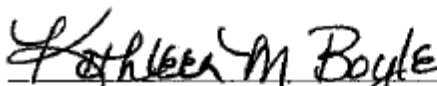
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS MINNESOTA

Community Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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Final Approval Date

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the idea of “community” in the context of community supported agriculture (CSA). Data from interviews with shareholders and farmers as well as multiple participant observations over two CSA seasons, revealed community as an important part of the CSA experience for both shareholders and farmers. The most important aspect of this arguably countercultural community was the relationship between the farmer and shareholder. Shareholders mentioned the idea of supporting a local farmer more frequently as the reason for their CSA participation than the vegetables themselves. The CSA replaced the anonymity of grocery store commodities with food raised by "my farmer."

Farmers displayed an unusual degree of satisfaction and enjoyment in their chosen profession. While most CSA farmers made less money than their shareholders, the farmers still devoted more time and attention (e.g. craftsmanship) to producing and delivering the weekly box of vegetables than one might have expected. The element of craftsmanship was a shared attribute between farmers and many of the shareholders. Farmers developed their craftsmanship growing the vegetables and shareholders developed their craftsmanship preparing and experimenting with the vegetables. The vegetables in the CSA box represented the tangible part of the farmer/shareholder relationship, but the magic of “community” was in the relationship itself.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My business partner and I own a small software development company and we serve a tiny niche market for nonprofit agencies. While not wildly profitable, by providing a good product and above average service we kept our clients happy for more than 25 years. Our primary competitors were small companies much like ourselves. Larger software developers did not view this tiny market niche as profitable. Then, one day these larger companies discovered this small revenue source in a slow economy and we found ourselves competing with two multi-million dollar software developers. We were now competing against larger companies with more marketing and development resources. Customers noticed and expectations changed.

When I began researching community supported agriculture I did not realize the similarities between the business environment for community supported agriculture and my own career as a small business owner. Even though I have a CSA membership, I did not even think of the CSA as a business. Even though I grew up on a farm, I did not see the parallel between our tiny software development company and a small community supported agriculture farm. I did not see the parallel, that is, until I talked to a CSA farmer at the Green Expo in St. Paul in 2011. At the time I could not identify what was “odd.” I sensed a feeling of, not fear but, disquiet. The farmer rented a display booth in this giant expo building and was surrounded by more corporate competitors. While this farmer’s display was obviously inexpensive, many of his competitors’ booths featured professionally designed banners and displays. The farmer looked out of place and almost overwhelmed by the “flashiness.” He reminded me of myself.

When my business partner and I first realized the threat posed by the new competitors we gritted our teeth and said we would continue providing quality products and services. We would try harder. We would do more. We could keep our customers happy. We had a relationship with our customers. We were friends. They could trust us. Relationships change and we soon

realized there were no guarantees. We discarded our small “homespun” approach to business and adopted more of a corporate image. We changed our approach to sales and marketing into something generic and homogenous. We changed our strategy into being “one of the crowd.” We no longer felt safe being different.

After talking to small farmers I realized our business and these small community supported agriculture farms faced similar situations. We were both targeting a niche market and both facing competition from bigger competitors. My business partner and I targeted a small software market with limited growth potential; a niche market of no interest to big business. In a slow economy, however, these small revenue streams became attractive to big business and we were vulnerable.

Likewise the community supported agriculture market was seeing competition from other small farmers, big farmers, and corporate farmers. It is unlikely that all of the farms will make it. What will this mean for community supported agriculture? What will be the difference between the farms that make it and the farms that do not? Will the difference be the vegetables? Probably not, everyone grows pretty much the same vegetables in this area. Will the difference be location? Probably not, most CSAs offer a number of convenient drop sites for urban customers so it does not matter where the farm is located. Will the difference be the price? Probably not, at least at this point the pricing between most farms is in the same ballpark.

So what about “community?” Could community make a difference? Does the idea of community even exist anymore? What is “community” in community supported agriculture?

While I was interested in the concept of community as it relates to community supported agriculture, I was also interested in the essence of “community” in a small business environment.

Small business owners survive on “community” and relationships. Could community build a successful business or would a successful business build community?

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research study was to examine the concept of “community” in community supported agriculture and whether or how “community” can develop and nurture the business side of a small community supported agriculture farm. Building a community and providing safe organic produce were two of the founding ideas behind the first two community farms in the U.S. in 1986. The business environment, however, has changed since the 1980s. According to O’Leary (2010), “No longer is it [community supported agriculture] the only game in town [for local organic produce], as it might have been in 1986, there are now many, many more ways to source local food” (p. 58).

So community supported agriculture no longer has the corner on the market for “buy local” and/or building community. But what is community and is “community” an essential element in the success or failure of small CSA farms? What can small farmers do to create community and, in turn, sustain their economic viability? Is this community a necessary part of the small CSA farmer’s business operation or has the success of the CSA model outmoded the concept of community?

There is no licensing board for community supported agriculture. No one determines who or what can “be” a CSA or use the CSA label. Nor are there any minimum standard requirements or official definitions of what a CSA requires, who can participate, or how a CSA is organized. Community-supported is a sort of generic label for an increasingly diverse line of products including restaurants, movie theaters, and fisheries to name a few. The CSA label, and with it the idea of “community”, is now genericized into a broad description for a general class

of business model like the name “Kleenex” or “Xerox.” If no one is protecting the use of the term, is the label being used to sell products or practices that will damage the concept and/or idea of community in community supported agriculture?

It is easy to use the CSA label and that is both a boon and a burden to the small CSA farmer. Anyone can call themselves a CSA, so it is easy for a small farmer to enter the marketplace with a recognizable product label. However, it is also easy to fail. Informal conversations with small CSA farmers about this topic induce horror stories about the damage unsuccessful CSAs have done to the CSA “label.” This damage can make it especially difficult for a small farmer to encourage the consumer back to the table. One bad experience can mean one less customer and an increasingly heavier burden on the small farmer in terms of recruiting and retaining CSA customers or community. If “community” is the most important part of the CSA label and an important source of loyalty and income for the small farmer, should there be protection or minimum requirements bearers of the CSA label should meet?

Informal discussions with small CSA farmers netted a completely negative response to limits on the label or the use of the CSA concept. Does that mean if someone wants to buy vegetables from the grocery store, put the vegetables in a box, and use the CSA label that is ok? Does the idea behind the CSA label create the community? Or does a relationship with the farm or farmer create the community? Or, even more importantly, does simply the *idea* of community create the community?

The original CSAs required shareholder involvement on the farm, but today many CSA members do not even visit the farm. Press (2007) found the idea or feeling of community significantly strengthened when consumers picked up their share from the farm. But the more widely-spread practice, at least in the Metropolitan area, is a network of drop sites where the

farmer leaves a pre-packaged box of vegetables. This practice makes the CSA membership more convenient for urban customers but, according to Press (2007), this arrangement turns the experience into a “modern-day service” (p. 31) rather than a community event.

Not only are the vegetables being packaged for the consumer, the founding ideals of community and relationship are also being packaged. Will this packaging promote or destroy community? Or is the important thing simply the “idea” of community instead of the actual concept or praxis of community?

Significance of the Problem

This study made two significant contributions to the current literature. The first contribution was in the area of community supported agriculture and the definition of community within this unique market niche. Do the economic needs of the farmer help or hinder the idea of community? Community supported agriculture is an unusual combination of socialistic ideals and capitalistic success. What happens to the small CSA farmer and the concept of “community” in community supported agriculture as more competition enters the marketplace? While there is research providing a working definition of community in community supported agriculture (Press, 2007), this research does not address the exponential growth in the number of CSA farms since the research was done in 2007.

The second contribution is in the area of leadership and management related to small CSA farmers and the marketing efforts required to build a community and customer base. Although research acknowledged community supported agriculture as a business, there was little discussion of the fact that many small CSA farmers can not support themselves on their farm income. Ironically, a living wage for farmers was one of the founding principles for the first community farms in the U.S. “In almost all cases” O’Leary (2010) wrote, “CSA has contributed

to the improvement of the social and cultural fabric of the community while it has not done so well in realizing the goal of economic viability for the farmer” (p. 55). O’Leary (2010) cited the example of a farm in New York State with 100-120 shareholders each paying approximately \$300. The \$36,000 gross revenue, according to O’Leary (2010) “did not meet basic labor and supply inputs necessary to even pay the farmer a living wage” (p. 56). The farm did not make a “break-even enterprise” (O’Leary 2010, p. 56) even with a spouse working off the farm and sales from other retail and wholesale outlets. Exploring what community means to the farmer and shareholder may help smooth the progress of community supported agriculture in a small business environment.

Overview of the Chapters

I organized this dissertation into six chapters. Chapter One provided an introduction to the issue and reflexive statement. I also described the statement and significance of the problem with the research questions of the study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature related to community supported agriculture, its history, its placement in the small business environment, and where community supported agriculture may be headed in the future. In addition, I included literature related to other ideas connected to community supported agriculture dealing with the role of community, farmer and shareholder motivation, and CSAs’ place in the counterculture milieu. This section also presents three theoretical frameworks which I use to analyze the data I collected. My selected theorists included Ferdinand Tönnies, Jean Baudrillard, and Dawn Melea Press and Eric Arnould.

In Chapter Three, I present the methodology of my study. This chapter includes a rationale for my research approach, sources of data and data collection, and analysis methods.

This chapter also includes descriptions of the five farms in my study, my study's limitations, and ethical considerations. Lastly, I present my approach to analyzing the data using Cresswell's (2007) Data Spiral.

Chapter Four includes the reporting of my findings. The findings include a discussion of the idea of community in community supported agriculture and the three themes that emerged from the data. My themes include 1) Farmers: A Force for Good; 2) Lopsided Loyalty: Farmer vs. Shareholder; 3) CSA: Community...Really? My first theme, Farmers: A Force for Good also includes four elements: 1) Farming as Craftsmanship; 2) Motivation, Meaning, and Purpose; 3) Caring for the Soil and Environment, 4) Transfer of Knowledge.

Chapter Five includes my theoretical analysis of the findings. The analyses include a discussion of Ferdinand Tönnies' theory of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Jean Baudrillard's theory of Simulation and Hyper-reality, and Dawn Melea Press and Eric Arnould's analysis of CSA farms' use of the internet and farm websites to move community supported agriculture from the counterculture to a mainstream marketing enterprise.

The last chapter, Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations, presents a summary of the major findings in the data. Based on these findings, I also present three recommendations for community supported agriculture farmers designed to potentially increase shareholder commitment and reduce turnover. I also include possible ideas for future researchers with regard to community supported agriculture and building community.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey of relevant literature related to the topic of community supported agriculture and the idea of community within the small business environment included the following topical research areas: History and overview of community supported agriculture, the small business side of community supported agriculture, the alternative community offered by community supported agriculture, and farmer motivation.

History and Overview of Community Supported Agriculture.

Nearly every article, dissertation, or documentation about community supported agriculture began with a description saying something about the relationship between the farmer and the consumer, the freshness of the produce, and the idea of the customer or shareholder investment in the farmer's harvest. There were a number of variations in how shareholders' investment was realized in terms of the distribution of the harvest, but the opening line was usually the same. Community supported agriculture builds a unique link or relationship between the CSA farmer and the CSA shareholder.

The idea of monetizing the close farmer and consumer relationship did not originate in the U.S., but gained in popularity and market legitimacy since the idea was introduced in 1986. The first two community garden farms opened simultaneously with very different organizational approaches, but similar ideals. Both farms were still in operation in 2014.

Temple-Wilton Community Farm. Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire set out a budget each year defining all necessary outlays for the season (including a living wage for the farmers). Shareholders pledged what they could afford toward covering the costs. Once all budgeted expenses were covered, no additional pledges were accepted and participants shared in the harvest on an "as needed" basis. There were no prescribed limits or

restrictions on what or how much of the vegetables each investor could pick up. However, all shareholders were required to agree to a list of Principles of Cooperation. The original intention of this farm was to “sever the direct relationship between the money needed to operate the farm and the produce that comes through the bounty of nature” (templewiltoncommunityfarm.com, A Brief History, n.d.).

A community farm is different from the farmer-driven CSAs prevalent in the Midwest. The idea of community for Temple-Wilton Community Farm was more important because the farm members were personally committed to respect and observe the seven Principles of Cooperation one of which was “Every farmer gives all the other farmers of the group the right to substitute for him in his work if he fails to do or complete something he has taken on” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 109). Another principle was “All farmers have to take care that they spend enough time on observation, planning and communications” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 109). The remaining principles capitalized on the cooperation and responsibilities farmers and members of the farm incur as part of the community. Despite the thought and attention paid to these principles, developing and maintaining community was more challenging as time went by (Groh & McFadden, 2000).

In spite of the challenges, in 2004 the required funding for the coming year’s operation was raised in 45 minutes (McFadden, 2004a). Anthony Graham, one of the founding farmers of Temple-Wilton Community Farm, explained the short meeting this way:

Our approach works. It requires honesty and good will, but it works...The last four or five years, our annual budget meeting with the farm members has only taken about 45 minutes. It’s fast, up front, and everyone understands it by now. (McFadden, 2004a, para. 5)

Trauger Groh, another of the founding farmers said the short and to the point meeting illustrated everything the farm did for the community. "Now is when all our work is paying off" Groh observed. "We have a track record of 18 years. People know us and trust us" (McFadden, 2004a, The Temple-Wilton Community Farm section, para.12).

Indian Line Farm. That same year (1986) Indian Line Farm in western Massachusetts started as an unincorporated land leasing plan managed by a core group of the shareholders. Robyn Van En, one of the founding farmers of Indian Line Farm grew winter vegetables for a group of local community members. During that growing season, she looked for a way to reduce her upfront capitalization costs and the risk incurred. She also wanted to create a "better way to oblige both the grower and the eaters" (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiii). In a conversation with Jan Vandertuin who had just returned to the U.S. from Switzerland where he worked with a group of farmers, Van En figured out what she had to do. Her first project was a "share the costs to share the harvest" idea and in the fall of 1985 Indian Line Farm sold neighbors and community members a family-size share of the fall apple harvest in advance. With that success behind her, Van En sold many of the same neighbors and community members the opportunity to sign up for a share of vegetables to be delivered in the spring of 1986. "No one had ever heard of being paid for vegetables in advance, before the first seed was planted, but we were finally approached by Hugh Ratcliffe, who started breaking ground that fall for the eventual spring planting" (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiv).

Naming the project was just one of the daunting decisions Van En and her fellow farmers faced as their first season of selling vegetable shares approached. "We finally decided on

Community Supported Agriculture” Van En wrote, “which could be transposed to Agriculture Supported Communities and say what we needed in the fewest words” (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiv). Van En was adamant about the word agriculture being part of the name. Because, she said, “I didn’t want to exclude similar initiatives from taking place on a corner lot in downtown Boston. We had to call it something fast because the project was ready to go” (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiv).

Indian Line Farm started as a community of farmers sharing labor, land, and the harvest. But that kind of closeness was not easy. Although Van En said she learned a lot about herself in the process, the farm split into two separate farms after the first four years. Both farms resulting from this split were still operational in 2014.

The Birth of the Idea. There are two different stories for the introduction of community supported agriculture in the U.S. One story credited the idea of community supported agriculture to Japan and the introduction of Teikei (or partnerships) in the 1970s. Teikei originally started with a group of Japanese women concerned about the produce available in local markets. These women began paying farmers directly to raise organic vegetables for them. Okumara (2004), whose mother was a Teikei participant, described the Teikei organization saying, “It is common to have a group of several farmers, dispersed throughout the countryside, networking with groups of many households to supply a consistent and diverse selection of products throughout the year” (p. 7).

In a Teikei relationship direct negotiation between the farmer and the individual consumers decided the pricing. In Japanese culture it was the responsibility of the consumer to consider the financial needs of the farmers when negotiating price and it was incumbent upon the farmers to keep the health and welfare of the families they fed in

mind. Thus the Teikei relationship was a mutually beneficial and advantageous relationship.

Although the Teikei movement started in Japan in the 1970s, McFadden (2004a) unequivocally credited the introduction of community supported agriculture in the U.S. to a European influence. When Indian Line Farm and Temple-Wilton Community Farm started their first season, it was Jan Vandertuin who provided the impetus. Vandertuin had been working on a farm based on the philosophy of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) near Geneva Switzerland. McFadden (2004a) extensively interviewed some of the original founders of the first two CSA farms and none of the founders of either farm had heard anything about the Japanese Teikei concept.

The first two farms started in 1986 and the number of CSA farms in the U.S. had grown to 12,549 by 2007 (USDA, 2009). This number was a self-reported number and did not include many of the small, informal farms that may have been participating in the CSA model and not registering their farm as CSAs. Because there is no national database or even, in the case of Minnesota, an official statewide database, these self-reported counts are the closest possible estimates available for the number of CSA farms. A directory of CSAs serving the Metropolitan Area and outstate Minnesota is maintained by the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and funded by the CSA farmers listed in the directory. The number of registered CSAs serving the Metropolitan Area jumped from 22 in 2004 to 64 in 2007. This listing only includes farms paying to be included in the LSP directory and does not include farms offering a CSA option but not registered with the LSP website.

Robyn Van En (1995), one of the original community farmers, believed that the world could be dominated by community supported stores, services, and other cottage industries. Her

dream of community-supported everything has, at least at this point, failed to materialize.

Loughridge (2002) compared the CSA concept to the beer-of-the-month or other “of-the-month” clubs where subscribers pay upfront for monthly delivery of the purchased product.

Loughridge (2002) also described his own experience with a movie theater in his community that sold season passes allowing purchasers to see all the movies they wanted within the time frame covered by the pass. The theater owner used the upfront money from the passes to refurbish the oldest movie theater in Raleigh, NC. This was an alternative movie theater, so pass purchasers were never sure which movies would be shown or whether they would want to see the movies playing at the theater. So, Loughridge (2002) concluded,

Somebody who likes Hollywood films will get less out of the pass than somebody who prefers films that are out of the mainstream...This also relates to CSA in that it is best suited to people who consume a lot of vegetables. (p. 204)

Just as in the movie example above, the shareholder can not be certain what will be in the weekly box of vegetables and/or whether they will like what they receive. They trust the relationship with the farmer to provide a product and service that realizes the value of their investment (Loughridge, 2002).

Community financing is not limited to agriculture or movie theaters. Shreeves (2009) cited the example of Clair's, a restaurant in Vermont, adopting the community supported agriculture version of funding. Claire's needed \$115,000 in start up funding and raised \$50,000 by selling \$1000 community supported restaurant coupons to fifty community members. These coupons entitled the purchasers to \$25 of food each month for ten monthly visits for four years. Shreeves (2009) acknowledged that community members were putting a lot of faith in the restaurant because if the restaurant did not succeed, the coupons would have no value. But,

according to Shreeves (2009), the investors got to actively support a local business and provided that business with a chance to succeed.

The idea of community supported agriculture has not stayed on the farm, but has moved into other industries. The farms themselves offered other products or teamed with other farmers to provide an outlet for local food products such as pastured beef, pork, poultry, cheese, and eggs. This expansion into other product areas created a profit premium of nearly nine percent for the farms that offered food products beyond vegetables and fruit (Connolly & Klaiber, 2012). In all of these cases small investors were investing in businesses with the potential of serving and/or creating a type of community within their local service area.

Community and Small Business

Does the idea of “community” help to build a successful business or is it a successful business that actually builds the community? Can “community” function as a marketing tool when the economy is slow? Will the need to market the CSA take over the community building aspect of community supported agriculture? When do shareholders become customers? Can CSAs survive commercial success?

In its simplest form, community supported agriculture is an economic exchange of money for food. But the CSA exchange involves more. According to Earles (2007), “The CSA ideal...is in many ways a radical critique of capitalism” (p. 5). Despite the capitalist society in which CSAs currently operate, the CSA model offers an opportunity to create new relationships within a community. These relationships may be both social relationships and/or ecological relationships (Earles, 2007).

The relationship between the shareholder and the farmer is different from the relationship a customer has with a grocer or a grocery store, even if the customer is buying organic produce.

When a shareholder invested in a CSA, Earles (2007) said the investment represented an attempt to rise above what Marx called “commodity fetishism” (McLellan, 1977, pp. 473-475). This fetishism arises when the labor that goes into production in a capitalist society is hidden from the consumer. The purchase or investment in a CSA share should rise above this fetishism because the CSA consumer/investor/shareholder is part of a relationship with the farmer. The shareholder also has an opportunity to understand and appreciate the time and labor that go into raising the vegetables in the CSA box.

As a result of fast food and processed food society has also learned to fetishize food and much of this fetishism can be traced back to what Ritzer (2011) calls the McDonaldization of society. Ritzer (2011) identified four elements of McDonaldization, 1) Efficiency, 2) Calculability, 3) Predictability, and 4) Control. These elements play into purchasing decisions in many subtle ways, “whether in the form of an unblemished, perfectly symmetrical potato sold in the grocery store or an extra large order of french fries doled out at a fast food chain” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p. 142) consumers expect the end product for a bargain price. Frequently there is little consideration for the costs of production needed to bring the product to market.

The CSA model is designed with the idea of revamping this food fetishism by teaching shareholders to value and appreciate their relationship with the farmer. In other words, “by making consumers’ relationships to a specific farm and farmer the most salient and valorized aspect of the choice scenario” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p. 143), community supported agriculture provides a way to reverse this fetishism. There is an opportunity to overturn the anonymity and depersonalization of the world of corporate food.

For some CSA members this appreciation of the labor, support of local agriculture, and risk sharing with the farmer provided what Lass, Lavoie, and Fetter (2005) called a “non-market benefit” (p. 5). This benefit contributed to a sense of loyalty and “brand” recognition for the farm. In addition, Lass et al. (2005) cited the occurrence of on-farm events and (in some cases) reduced-price work shares combining to make the “produce purchased at the grocery store ... a poor substitute for the produce provided in a CSA share” (p. 5). Seyfang (2007) agreed, saying that economic benefits were not the motivators for CSA members. CSA members, he said, are motivated more “by the values it [CSA] embodies and the lifestyle it permits” (Seyfang, 2007, p. 110).

Another small business aspect of community supported agriculture is how CSA farms enhance the circulation of money within the community. This money boost to the local economy is important because the investment in a local farmer allows the farmer to compete with chain stores (Loughridge, 2002). “Another way of thinking about this is that every dollar directed toward CSA is a dollar that is not siphoned away from the community” (Loughridge, 2002, p. 202).

This local investment in a small business actually has “the potential to strengthen a community’s ‘horizontal ties’ by bringing local community members together” (Loughridge, 2002, p. 202). These horizontal or local ties increase the community’s cultural distinctiveness while vertical ties (patronizing chain restaurants, shopping at chain grocery stores, and other commercial enterprises) move money outside of the community and reduce community cohesiveness and cultural distinctiveness (Loughridge, 2002). Money spent locally with a CSA, creates a “substantial Local Premium in enhanced economic impact” (Civic Economics, 2004).

A 2004 economic study done by Civic Economics in Andersonville, IL, a suburb of Chicago, compared the economic impact of ten locally-owned and operated businesses and chain stores within the same geographic area. When \$100 was spent by consumers in local business, \$68 of those dollars remained in the Chicago economy to recirculate in the community. On the other hand, when the same \$100 was spent in a chain store, only \$43 of those dollars remained in the Chicago economy (Civic Economics, 2004, p. 1). Thus, the study said, this additional money circulating in the local economy may mean “more home improvement, more in the collection plate, and more in taxable transactions to fund city services” (Civic Economics, 2004, p.5). Although the businesses in the Andersonville Study were primarily restaurants and retail businesses, one can extrapolate these results to include community supported agriculture farms. More money spent locally means more money in the local economy.

CSA Organization. There are a myriad of different business models for community supported agriculture farms, some more businesslike than others. Some CSAs have a sort of board of directors made up of farm shareholders. This “board” determines what will be planted and when it will be planted. Other CSAs, and this is the most common in the Midwest, are almost entirely farmer-run requiring minimal input from shareholders. A few of these CSAs require (or request) members to contribute time and/or labor during the CSA season. Other CSAs offer reduced-price shares based on the number of volunteer hours. Some CSAs do not require or even want volunteer labor.

The predominant business model in the Upper Midwest is a farmer-driven model that requires the farmer to make all the decisions and, in turn, be almost entirely responsible for the development of community. McFadden (2004b) acknowledged that core groups (or boards of directors) do not appeal to every farmer’s idea of farming. However, CSAs with a strong core

group were better prepared to survive in tough economic times. The core group model, according to Lass et al. (2005) tend to be larger farms with a long-standing group of shareholders who are committed to the CSA model and truly value the farmer's commitment and service. In addition, "these people may be more willing to compensate the farmer for her effort" (Lass et al., 2005, p 13). Frequently this core group also takes over the organization of community events which build the idea of community in association with the farm. These things may explain the typically higher share prices charged by core group CSAs and the willingness of the shareholders to pay these higher prices (Lass et al., 2005).

When there is not a core group the responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the community is added to the list of farmer responsibilities. According to O'Leary (2010) instead of complaining about this unbalanced distribution of responsibility, it is up to "civic agriculture proponents" to actually do something about it:

This current research suggests that community engagement is challenged with a lopsided effort put forth by the producer. It seems reasonable to consider working with this reality rather than lamenting the lack of participant involvement along terms of service beyond straightforward participation. How civic agriculture proponents respond to this information will be crucial in order to exercise its continued relevance. (p. 60)

Regardless of organizational style, every small business must take care to address shareholder/customer needs and concerns. As shareholders and customers change, these needs and concerns change. Lang (2010) cited some of the changes he found in the farm he studied in Virginia as many of the original members with high levels of involvement gradually dropped away leaving a whole new set of shareholders.

Over time the number of members increased while the degree of member involvement decreased...Similarly, share prices went up and fewer members visited the farm. It did not take long for all the founding members to eventually cycle out of the organization. (Lang, 2010, p. 21)

These changes mirrored societal changes in America, according to Lang (2010). Changes such as the increased number of working women, the heavier debt load of American families, and more time spent commuting for work or other extra curricular activities created a feeling of busyness which limited the number of new commitments families were willing to add to their schedules (Lang, 2010). CSAs were also changing in order to address the “busyness” of American society. Frequently these changes meant cutting back on the relationship aspect of the CSA model and taking on a more business-like approach to the CSA operations.

In response to shareholder busyness many farms eliminated the shareholder work requirement. This meant that, in instances without on-farm pickup, often shareholders did not even meet their farmer. At the same time email and social media were added to the farmers’ CSA tool kit. This addition further reduced the need for live communication and old fashioned relationship-building activities. However, accompanying this increase in efficiency and business-like operations was a lower rate of customer satisfaction according to Loughridge (2002).

Current lifestyle costs and societal structures were largely counted in the form of time and energy which did not leave a lot of space for a CSA time commitment according to Earles (2007). The ideal of community supported agriculture is a relationship that requires time. The separation of production and consumption, which is indicative of a capitalist society means that people spend their time working for money to meet their daily needs. This necessity of work,

according to Earles (2007) meant that “most consumers do not have the extra time needed to carry out everyday tasks in a way that is more sustainable...or commit to a fully engaged relationship with CSA farms” (p. 116).

The move to the small business emphasis, in part, was brought about by Lang (2010) and others’ (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone & Kakalioursas 1995; DeLind 2003; Russell & Zapeda 2008) research findings that CSA members’ interest in community was actually quite low. As a result, “CSA administrators accommodate the preference of a growing number of members who are most interested in the provision of locally-grown and organic produce” (Lang 2010, p. 24). This accommodation was exacerbated by the fact that there were few long-term CSA members and for many of the current members, according to Lang (2010), this was the only form of subscription farming they have known.

CSA farmers changed their business model to more closely track the desires of current CSA shareholders in an attempt to sustain the viability of their small business (Goland 2002). If too many members complained about the number of work days or said the farm was hosting too many farm events, Goland said it was probably a good idea to cut back on the number of events just to keep members satisfied. In CSA research completed by Loughridge in 2002, the less structurally stable CSAs [less business-oriented] were the more successful CSAs compared to the more organized [business-oriented] CSAs. Loughridge (2002) did not venture an explanation for this counter intuitive finding, but did list this as one of the findings requiring additional research.

Creating Community

The creation of community is a challenge. The definition of community is even more of a challenge. “Community, like everything else worthwhile, is ambiguous” (Cobb, 1996, p. 194).

Regardless of their imperfections, however, Cobb (1996) said communities protect society from decay and are essential for the revitalization of rural America.

Cobb identified three necessary elements for a community, but even these elements are fluid depending on the context. The first of Cobb's (1996) elements was a feeling of mutual responsibility for other community members. The second element was the ability of community members to self-identify. This ability to self-identify is particularly important with the breakdown of geographical communities and the increase in the number of virtual online communities. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) even introduced the idea of brand communities as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p. 412).

The final element Cobb (1996) linked with community was participation in the life of the community and, to some degree, in the decisions being made about the community. This was where the concept of community for the evolving CSA model became more ambiguous. The idea that the shareholder may never meet their farmer or visit the CSA, but instead become a passive recipient of the CSA vegetable delivery brings into question the applicability of the word "community" to community supported agriculture.

Cone and Kakalioursas (1995) were skeptical of a farm's ability to build community. They were even skeptical as to whether the consumer was looking for community as much as seeking nostalgic relief for how they imagined things used to be. The ideas of pastoralism and nostalgia loom large in the CSA model, not so much on the outside, but in the concept and perception of CSA. Cone and Kakalioursas (1995) said although CSA had potential as a harbinger of resistance against corporate food, it had not shown itself to be effective at building the kinds of long-term relationships that type of movement required. This, according to Cone

and Kakalioursas (1995) was primarily because the CSA shareholders were more interested in the pastoralist imagery and the fresh vegetables than the community.

Marx (1964) called the kind of nostalgia and longing that Cone and Kakalioursas (1995) described a simple kind of pastoralism drawing on one's desire to move away from the centers of civilization and back to a simpler time of life. This kind of pastoralism is “merely another of our many vehicles of escape from reality” (Marx, 1964, p. 10). Cone and Kakalioursas (1995) described the CSA imagery as “a nostalgia for imagined linked relationships of our rural past” (p. 29). It was difficult for this kind of community to be built when taking into account the busyness of the average American's life (Cone & Kakalioursas, 1995).

There was no ambiguity about what kind of community DeLind (1999) wanted to create in the two years she spent developing and operating a CSA farm in Michigan. Community was the reason behind community supported agriculture and this community required buy in and membership. “For me” DeLind (1999) said, “if we were to build community we needed to share both the vision and the effort...I felt that we shouldn't cater to members as customers...To do so...I argued, would undermine the basis for community” (p. 8). Although DeLind argued and fought for community within her CSA farm organization, community, as she believed in it, did not happen. “I believed this then and I believe it now. But I could not, for good reason, make it happen. I could not change the world or even that small part in my own backyard” (p. 8).

After her two-year stint as a CSA farmer, DeLind (1999) was also disappointed to find the ideal of an alternate market choice to be crowded out by the reality of working within the capitalist framework. She said the CSA became “an alternate market arrangement rather than a partial alternative to the market economy” (p. 5). Contrary to the original intentions of the

founding farmers, according to DeLind (1999), the idea of community took a backseat to both consumer and shareholder convenience.

There are other factors that go into the concept of community supported agriculture and small business. For some CSA farmers the CSA model was simply a marketing tool. “Farmers do...admit that for some of them and their peers there is an emphasis on CSA’s marketing potential rather than on its potential to self-consciously promote significant change in people’s relationships to food, farmers, the community, and the natural world” (Earles, 2007, p. 65). Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) documented the emergence of community supported agriculture, not so much as a marketing tool, but as a countercultural response to the co-optation of the organic produce market by corporate farms.

Sales and marketing for CSAs is the same as for other small businesses according to Zehler (2011) who applied the four P’s of marketing, (product, place, price, and promotion) to CSA farms. “The four P’s,” Zehler (2011) said, “allow farmers to analyze the products they can provide, where/whom they can provide them to, at what price, and how they will be able to promote their developing CSA” (p. 4). This application of general marketing principles to community supported agriculture at first may seem crass, but CSAs, just like any other small business must keep the money coming in. “To keep the CSA money flowing, farmers need to know why members chose to participate and why they chose to renew their memberships. This allows farmers to better serve their CSA members and promote their products” (Zehler, 2011, p. 6). The application of the four P’s, Zehler said, could be used by CSAs to better identify customer wants and needs.

Surprisingly most of the four P’s have been touched on, however tangentially, by other researchers. There was not, however, a lot of discussion about pricing in the literature. While

the majority of CSA members were upper income (Lang, 2005), many CSA farmers actually made less money than most of their shareholders (O’Leary, 2010). Pricing is tricky for farmers. If the price is too high, shareholders will not renew. “Yet if it [the price] is too low, CSA farmers subsidize the CSA through their own self-exploitation” according to Hinrichs (2000, p. 100).

A living wage for CSA farmers was one of the original community supported agriculture goals, but that goal is far from realization. O’Leary (2010) included most small farmers, particularly CSA farmers, as low-wage workers. Crop failures and unmet sales projections led one of the farmers with whom O’Leary did his research to consider giving up farming. Although the farm did not discontinue operation, O’Leary (2010) said the CSA income did not even cover the costs of required inputs for operation.

Based on a nine-state survey of CSA farmers in the Midwest, Tegtmeier & Duffy (2005) calculated the average total net return for CSA farms to be \$6,643 per year. They estimated the mean annual family income (including off-farm wages) to be 53% of the average median household income for the nine states surveyed. Research done by Lass et al. (1995) on CSAs in the Northeastern U.S. found negative net income results when factoring in labor, insurance, and retirement benefit costs.

Ben James (2012) described his conundrum as a small farmer in his essay, *Worth*.

We are growing many different crops (forty-six and counting) on a small amount of land (eleven acres), and this...is a fundamentally inefficient thing to do.

Although we strategize endlessly about how to make our operation run more smoothly – setting up systems, buying new equipment, instructing and correcting the crew – it’s a hopeless endeavor. Eventually we’ll need either to substantially

increase the size of our farm or shift our marketing strategy to grow only a handful of the most profitable crops. (p. 60)

“It’s not easy to be a boss” James said “especially when your workers are getting paid more than you are (at least \$9 an hour)” (2012, p. 61).

DeLind (1999) walked away from her experience on a CSA farm disappointed, jaded and exhausted. “We voluntarily exploited ourselves to give those who purchased shares a full return on their investment...In classic farmer fashion we personally absorbed the risk and gave away our labor (and our hearts) in the process” (p. 6). Although DeLind unabashedly declared her motivation and inspiration to be the creation of community, she admitted it was difficult to remove herself and the farm from what she called “the pervasive market mind set – the tyranny of capital” (p. 5) that influenced the farm’s behavior and prompted reactions counter intuitive to the original goals.

Yet, this kind of exploitation is not necessarily unavoidable. A study done by Lass et al. (2005) found that CSA farmers in the Northeastern United States chose to not exercise all the monopoly pricing power they had. “Our results suggest that CSA farms have the power to price above marginal costs, but for a variety of reasons, they choose to exert very little of that power” (Lass et al., 2005, p. 15). One of the possible reasons cited by Lass et al. may be the “altruistic feelings of the farmer towards shareholders” (2005, p. 15).

CSA as Counterculture?

Other literature moved CSA out of the small business environment and into the countercultural arena. Ambach (2002) posited that CSAs offered an alternative set of values for consumers. Instead of catering to “the consumer king” (Ambach, 2002, p. 2), CSAs focused on sustainability rather than growth. CSA as an alternative set of values moved community supported agriculture into an entirely different countercultural framework.

So, what is the alternative that community supported agriculture offers to the consumer today? One might say that “community” is the alternative being offered, but multiple studies indicate that the idea of community is actually low on the list of priorities for shareholders (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone and Kakalioursas 1995; DeLind 2003; Russell and Zapeda 2008). More than 15 years ago, Cone and Kakalioursas (1995) in studying community supported agriculture in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, recognized that community was not the most important motivator. “From the average member’s perspective” said Cone and Kakalioursas (1995), “the demands of membership may begin and end with the bag of vegetables” (p. 30).

Community in many respects may be of far more importance to the farmer (in terms of marketing) than to the shareholder. DeLind (1999) quoted one shareholder survey that instructed her farm to “concentrate on the vegetables and stop forcing an artificial community” (p. 7). This did not say that community was not important, but it was not one of the top issues for CSA members. The highest priority for most CSA members was the fresh, organic produce (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone & Kakalioursas 1995; DeLind 2003; Russell and Zapeda 2008).

If the highest priority is the organic produce, one might assume that the opportunities for building community are limited. Ambach (2002) said, “The community in the case of CSA, as I gradually found out, was far from cohesive or unitary, with each CSA member appropriating her participation in a rather individualistic fashion” (p. 24). DeLind (1999) agreed, she found a lack of a sense of mutual responsibility for the farm and food production and “little beyond an immediate appreciation for chemical-free, fresh vegetables” (p. 7). DeLind said there was not a basis for building community and loyalty during her two years on a CSA farm.

Although it is not community per se, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) cited community supported agriculture as a countercultural response to existing market forces (i.e. the

takeover of the organic produce market by corporate farming interests). The countercultural aspect of organic food was widespread in the 1960s and was carried forward by a small, but dedicated group of citizens throughout the ensuing forty years (Belasco, 2007, Roszak, 1995, Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a). The idea of organic in the early years was, by default, a small farmer and a countercultural economic “vote” against corporate food.

That has changed and 80% of organic food sales are now distributed by corporate food conglomerates (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli 2007a). CSA farmers have managed, according to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) to create a unique market niche by “aggressively reasserting the countercultural values and ideals that originally animated the organic food movement” (p. 136). Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) said CSAs were reasserting the emphasis on fresh, organic produce. Even though corporate food interests could easily grow more food, they could not compete with CSAs in terms of “the sensory appeal of just-harvested produce, face-to-face personal relationships between farmers and consumers, and the sense of direct participation in a tightly-knit community network” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p. 139).

Loughridge (2002) said CSA members were not necessarily less interested in the concept of community because of the increased feelings of busyness, but they were less interested in actually participating in the CSA community. The idea of community and supporting the local economy and farmer, Loughridge (2002) maintained, was still important to shareholders. It was just that those consumers did not have the time to actually participate in the community.

The desire for fresh organic produce, after all, was one of the original inspirations for community supported agriculture so one should not be surprised if fresh produce was the most important element of the CSA to the shareholder. Consumers were looking for an alternative to

the pesticide-laden monoculture produce available at that time. Picardy (2001) said, “CSA developed, in part, from discontent with conventional, large-scale agriculture. Thus, CSA was a deliberate movement to combat the negative environmental, economic, and social externalities associated with the conventional food system” (p. 51). Back in 1986 community supported agriculture offered a direct relationship with the farmer growing the food and eliminated the middleman. The consumer was getting fresh produce and the farmer was getting more of the profit for the labor involved in producing the food.

It isn’t only vegetables. Even though fresh produce is most often at the top of the list of shareholder priorities, community supported agriculture is not only about fresh produce. Community supported agriculture is also about community values (Press, 2007). As relationships develop, the values demonstrated include a concern for community and the individuals within the community. The relationships can be strengthened, according to Press (2007), by identifying and building on these shared values. Press (2007) identified values with three unique characteristics expressed by individuals involved with CSAs. These values include: “(a) they [the values] express a concern for the community as well as the individual; (b) they [the values] engage with and reference time; and (c) they [the values] are demonstrated through relationships” (p. 18).

According to Press (2007) these value characteristics could be identified in the behavior and responses of both farmers and shareholders in the CSA community. By recognizing and playing upon these shared values, it may be possible to create groups that “benefit the individuals involved and strengthen the relationships that form the community itself” (Press, 2007, p. 18). One of the reasons this was important, according to Press (2007) was because the very idea of community was an inherent value for both CSA members and farmers.

Farmers focus on their work, wanting it to be meaningful and have a positive effect on their community. Members focus on how they can help support their community (e.g. by supporting their local farmer), but this sentiment seems to go deeper to a more basic desire to help each other. (Press, 2007, p. 32)

Some may say Press (2007) reflected an idealized view of community-supported agriculture and the alternative it offered to the community. To a certain extent this may be correct. DeLind (1999) said even if the difficulties she faced in her two years managing a CSA farm in Michigan had been easier, she doubted that the “community aspect of CSA would have flowered into anything more meaningful” (p. 6).

Press and Arnould (2011) went on to use the concept of American pastoralism to explain the movement of community supported agriculture into the cultural mainstream. “We show that American pastoralism provides a link between 19th century agrarian ideals, 1950s suburbia, 1970s counter-cultural communes, and today’s CSAs” (p. 168). This link, Press and Arnould (2011) said subverted the negative ideas attached to consumption, making this CSA transaction a source of moral superiority. The CSA purchase was repackaged as a morally superior consumer choice while singling out the industrial food system “as the key symbol of the discontents of urban civilization” (p. 189).

O’Leary (2010), on the other hand, sounded the death knell for the idea of community and community supported agriculture in its current form. He said the increasing availability of organic food in grocery stores and farmers markets made the CSA model “irrelevant” (p. 216). In the end, O’Leary (2010) said, “My experience, observations, and data gathering over the past eight years with this CSA specifically tell me that the program is unsustainable” (p. 216).

Community just was not important anymore (O'Leary, 2010). "The current research also suggests important considerations to temper the perceived need for community and its ability to sustain CSAs over the long term. The focus of community must be reconsidered, not lamented for its seemingly hidden nature" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 58-59).

Hello, Middleman? Looking again at the business side of community supported agriculture, if the shareholders are most interested in receiving fresh, organic produce, are we introducing the middleman into this relationship? Loughridge (2002) provided an example of middlemen replacing the farmer/shareholder relationship with an impersonal and transactional connection between consumers and fresh produce. With these newer business arrangements, the only thing required was a valid credit card. Loughridge (2002) described what he found this way:

For example, business enterprises such as Green Earth Organics and Front Door Organics have emerged in many larger North American cities...They take the idea of CSA to an entire new level...these two business enterprises sell season-long memberships...the CSA is not owned by a farmer. Rather, it is operated by an entrepreneur who deals with multiple vegetable brokers and farmers...organic produce is sold to non-members. Anybody with a valid credit card can purchase a week's half share, a week's full share, or individual items via the Internet. Because every business transaction is done on the computer, there is not any face-to-face communication between buyers and sellers. Members and nonmembers simply place their orders and have their allotment delivered right to their front door. (p. 201)

This was a recreation of the existing farmer/middleman relationship. Once again the risk was placed on the backs of the farmers. The middleman bought what he needed from the lowest cost farmer and there was a race to the bottom in terms of pricing

Earles (2007) said this threat could be overcome by allowing community supported agriculture to change. But this change must be in cooperation with the entire CSA community and required buy-in from all participants. Earles (2007) proposed community infrastructure so “farmers can more efficiently process their produce and local institutional outlets for the food they produce--outlets that have the potential to reach a much broader swath of the population than individual direct marketing is currently able to do” (p. 75).

Seyfang (2007) described this type of cooperation taking place in England where a group of nine organic farmers in the East of England teamed up with a cooperative of 50 organic growers in Italy. This cooperative strength gave the farmers access to larger markets they had not been able to access on their own. The farmers expanded their offerings and maintained food stalls at multiple locations twelve months a year.

Community was still a part of this cooperative (Seyfang, 2007). In some cases, these food stalls became an information distribution point for other sustainably produced foods, anti-GMO (genetic-modification) meetings, alternative healthcare practices, and wildlife conservation. At the same time, these food stalls, staffed by the farmers, also became a point of identification and branding for the consumers. They knew the farmers and shared the values represented by the farmer cooperative.

Earles (2007) said in the U.S. this kind of cooperation would need some careful promotion and creative financing to prevent the co-optation by larger corporate food industrialists. Cooperation, however, could circumvent the middlemen and allow the farmers to

submit “the true cost of their efforts to local institutions and the community” (p. 75). In turn, this would address the issue of farmers' low financial return on their labor. Additionally, cooperation could allow community supported agriculture to operate as an alternative to the economic anonymity of the existing food system that hides the work and the worker from the consumer (Earles, 2007).

Picardy (2001) also addressed the social effects of our current economic approach to food. Not knowing who is growing the food or where the food is grown, transported, or processed, creates social distance that discourages community and increases economic anonymity. Picardy (2001) knew farms must be economically viable, but she saw the alternative presented by the CSA model as “much more than an economic alternative for producing and obtaining food. CSA also offers alternative views of human nutrition, ecological health, social and community awareness, and a philosophy of ecological and human sustainability” (p. 53).

This alternative approach to the community supported agriculture model was described by Hinrichs (2000) as an “economic transaction suffused with trust” (p. 300). The purpose of most conventional financial transactions is to “grow more money” (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 300). But, this locally grown, high quality produce is also an investment in encouraging an approach to agriculture that “produces food in a more environmentally and socially beneficial way” (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 300).

These are idealistic images in today's capitalistic society. Will community supported agriculture succumb to economic pressures? Not every CSA farmer is so idealistic. Earles (2007) talked to some farmers who used the CSA moniker simply as a marketing tool. One farmer Earles interviewed said, “I don't see it [CSA] as a form of social movement, because it has really turned into a marketing tool” (p. 66).

Where Do We Go From Here? The idea and concept of community supported agriculture covers a wider swath of the current social schema than we may see at first glance. There is the seemingly simple concept of raising, packaging, and delivering fresh produce to the paying customer. There is the development and work involved in running a successful business and marketing the CSA product/service to customers. There is also a political and countercultural aspect to community supported agriculture exemplified by the consumer seeking an alternative not only for the food they eat, but also for the setting in which the economic transactions take place.

Despite the difficulties faced by CSA farmers it is possible to successfully create an alternative. The Temple-Wilton Community Farm, one of the two first CSA-style farms in the U.S., was still in operation after 26 years. The farm's goal was to eliminate the relationship between the farm's operational monies and the produce that comes through the bounty of nature (Groh & McFadden, 2000). This successful alternative was built on community with each family pledging what they could afford to support the farm. The food from the farm went into the Community Farm store and was available to all. "Rich or poor, they take what they need. If you are hard up for money, you still get food. The community knows you and helps you" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 107).

Community was important to Traugher Groh, one of the original founders of Temple-Wilton Community Farm. Much of what is wrong with society, Groh said, is that "far-reaching decisions, affecting many others, are made by people who share no risk, or only a limited risk" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 39). By becoming a member of a CSA farm and participating in the process of growing, harvesting, and financing the production of food, Groh said we can introduce "a wholesome, new structure into our community" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 39).

At this point in the evolution of community supported agriculture the CSA model could move in two completely different directions. One direction capitalizes on the economic, social, nutritional, and community alternatives provided by community supported agriculture. The other direction moves toward an impersonal, transactional, profit-oriented backdrop that eschews the idea of community. This brings in the question raised by a long-time community supported agriculture observer, “Is a community really necessary for a CSA? Or do you just need a group of consumers?” (McFadden, 2004b, The Cooperation Key section, para. 3).

Why Do Farmers Do What They Do?

Why do farmers farm? What motivates or moves a farmer to work long hours in the hot sun, in the pouring rain, and in the freezing fall? Why do the farmers take the risks they take every spring, planting the seeds, but not knowing if it will be warm enough or cool enough or rain enough or rain too much or hail or any of those things?

I did not find literature specifically answering these questions, but I did find a book named *Greenhorns: The Next Generation of American Farmers*. This book featured 50 essays from new, young farmers. When this book was published in 2012 the average age of the American farmer was 57 (von Tscherner Fleming, 2012, p. 9). But von Tscherner Fleming saw a wave of new, young farmers “almost inexplicably” hitching their lives to agriculture. Farming, she said, was an expression of patriotism and hope. “Our hope has grandeur in it, not just sacrifice. We are creating our own new rural institutions of celebration and cultural interest: crop mobs and hoe downs and seed swaps” (p. 11).

This attitude of hope and optimism was not reflected in all of the essays in the book. But there was a love of farming and a joy associated with being a farmer. There was a lot of talk about the hard work, the disappointing harvests, the trials of too big a harvest, and the process of

learning how to farm, when to fight, and who to look to for help. Nothing about being a farmer today sounded easy.

Several of the farmers talked about the problems and challenges they had finding the money to do what they wanted to do. One farmer financed her first year of farming using a credit card with a twelve-month zero percent interest rate. Another farmer had to promise not to farm in order to get a home loan to buy a farm. Yet, most of the essays reflected hope, joy, and optimism. Where do those feelings come from? What about farming is so motivating?

Motivation – Type I and Type X. Farming, as a career, includes all the elements of motivation that Daniel Pink (2009) said are necessary for the Type I (intrinsically-motivated) individual to out-perform, the Type X (extrinsically-motivated) individual over the long term. The elements of motivation for the Type I individual include autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Ironically, for the intrinsically-motivated individual, money ceases to be a motivator if there is enough money to cover the bills in the first place (Pink, 2009).

Pink's (2009) second element of motivation, mastery, nicely dovetails with the idea of craftsmanship as defined by Sennett (2008). Craftsmanship, said Sennett, is “an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (p. 9). In like manner, Pink (2009) said mastery, as the second element of motivation, follows three rules. The first rule is about the way you think. You need to see your abilities as unlimited in terms of improvement. The second rule of mastery is that it requires “effort, grit and deliberate practice” (p. 208). The final rule of mastery is that mastery is impossible to achieve. But impossibility does not stop the craftsman because “The joy [of mastery] is in the pursuit more than the realization” (Pink, 2009, p. 127).

These elements of motivation and craftsmanship were reflected in many of the fifty essays in the Greenhorns book. Farmers were frequently introverts who enjoyed the alone time

in the field and recognized joy, not in what they had as much as in what they achieved. One of the Greenhorns essays explained the reason why this couple wanted to farm and incorporated the elements of motivation and craftsmanship cited by Pink (2009) and Sennett (2008).

We were drawn to farming because we love to work hard and eat well...As with many other farmers, we didn't become farmers because we were looking to socialize; we were looking for solitude. We wanted to own a business that enabled us to slow down and enjoy our lives each day. We wanted to do everything from developing business plans to working in the soil. We wanted to figure it all out ourselves and 'own' the process. (Miller & Miller, 2012, p. 232)

The elements of craftsmanship and Type I motivation were also apparent in a National Public Radio story about new, young farmers. The story was about the farmers attending a conference for organic farmers in Tarrytown, NY. Some of the farmers wanted to learn a skill. One young farmer said, "Having a skill was really important to me. Having studied political science, I wanted to do something that was productive, that was real" (Charles, 2011, para. 16). Another farmer said the field was his office and with farming he had the opportunity to live his values (Charles, 2011).

However, it was not all about idealism. Jim Crawford, an organic farmer for 40 years, trained more than 200 apprentices on his farm. He said he kept hammering away to these apprentices about the business side of farming. Because, as Crawford said, a farmer must know how to manage, borrow, and make money. In addition, Crawford said, farmers must know how to enjoy and appreciate the business aspect of farming as much as the growing side of things (Charles, 2011).

Summary

This was an overview of the relevant community supported agriculture literature. In this section I covered the topics of the history and future of community supported agriculture as well as a review of the literature about the business side of CSAs. In addition, I discussed the idea of community from the perspective of community supported agriculture literature. Finally, I stepped away from CSA literature and did a brief introduction to some of the motivational literature that helped describe the similarities between CSA farmers and shareholders.

Analytic Theory

My study looked at the role (if any) “community” played in the continuation of the community supported agriculture business model. I looked at my data using Ferdinand Tönnies’s lens of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (translated as community and association), and Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulacrum and hyper-reality. These theorists are not frequently linked, but they tie together the idea and structure of community supported agriculture in a unique way.

Originally, the concept of community was imbedded within the very idea of community supported agriculture. But time and social development as outlined with Tönnies’s concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* map out the progression of community supported agriculture from its inception to its place in society and commerce today. The escalated social development of CSAs reflected what Baudrillard described as hyper-reality and simulacrum. Using the lenses above, my study contributed to existing literature by exploring the concept of community within the milieu of Tönnies and Baudrillardian theory.

I also drew on existing literature to include the concept of American Pastoralist ideology as applied by Melea Press and Eric Arnould (2011) to describe the emergence of community supported agriculture in today’s marketplace. Although Pastoralist ideology integrates the concepts of *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* and simulacra, Press and Arnould (2011) did not use these lenses to explore the development of the community supported agriculture marketplace or the idea of community as part of the CSA model. Their tack, although not unorthodox, seemed to minimize the impact of community in the CSA model by tracing the development of community supported agriculture from countercultural upstart to fully legitimate marketplace player.

Tönnies – Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) developed and refined the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft to illustrate the evolution of society from a primarily family and community-based structure to an anonymous capitalistic and mechanistic social organization. The idealized mental constructs of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft describe the development of society from childhood to adulthood. These mental constructs do not and can not exist in their pure form, but the ideals give scholars a tool to characterize societal groups at various points in history.

Gemeinschaft, frequently translated as community, binds together the ideas of community, family, and land based on social relationships. Ties of religion and kinship create personal trust, something that Tönnies (1955) termed “natural will.” Because of the co-dependence and communal bond between members of the Gemeinschaft, remaining within the community is a “natural” thing to do. Living within the constraints of familial relationships is a natural outgrowth of community and is a natural expectation, especially when there is minimal contact or interference from forces outside the community.

Members of the Gemeinschaft have an innate consciousness of their own responsibility and reflect this responsibility as “moral obligation, moral imperative, or prohibition, and a righteous aversion to the consequences of the incorrect, illegal, and unlawful” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 9). For each member of the Gemeinschaft the continuance of the traditions, customs, and way of life is understood as a primary obligation and, hence, a reflection of Tönnies' “natural will.”

The Gemeinschaft can not last forever and is constantly under pressure from commerce and commercialism, new scientific ideas, and the exigencies of youth. The Gemeinschaft naturally weakens and adapts to these pressures. This adaptation or evolution gradually changes the “natural will” to what Tönnies (1955) called the “rational will” of the Gesellschaft. Tönnies

(1955) said this adaptation to social and economic pressures meant the original qualities of *Gemeinschaft* may be lost. The adaptation would engender a continuing change in the way the members of the *Gemeinschaft* live and work together. “This change reaches its consummation in what is frequently designated as individualism” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 28). This rational will is synonymous with individualism and individualism is the foot in the door for the ascendancy of *Gesellschaft*.

As the *Gesellschaft* develops, the moral obligations of the *Gemeinschaft* are gradually replaced with the legal obligations of laws and contracts and the “rational will.” Unlike the *Gemeinschaft* with its ideas of living and working together for a common purpose, in the *Gesellschaft* the association or connections between members are temporary and last only as long as the outcome of the association produces a positive result for the members of the association. Customs, rituals, and beliefs are only of importance if they enhance or improve the *Gesellschaft*. In Tönnies' *Gesellschaft* individuals relate to each other to reach a goal, and if there is no goal, there is no relationship (Sergiovanni, 1993).

“In *Gesellschaft* every person strives for that which is to his own advantage and affirms the actions of others only in so far as and as long as they can further his interests” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 88). The idea of competition and the exchange of wealth-producing goods and services are the predominating *Gesellschaft* factors. These ideas are very different from the cooperation and community-based decision making process of the *Gemeinschaft*.

So what is the contrast in the exchange of commodities in the *Gemeinschaft* vs. the *Gesellschaft*? Tönnies (1955) described the best conditions for a *Gemeinschaft*-like exchange as a situation where there was no desire to “best” someone else. The best conditions were present

when both parties in a transaction wanted the best for each other. The best situation for an exchange was where,

...On both sides there is only a moderate desire to exchange goods, prompted by a liking or need for the object in question. In fact, barter represents the only form in which a principle of distribution, according to the principles of *Gemeinschaft*, manifests itself. (Tönnies, 1955, p. 107)

In *Gesellschaft* the options for exchange cover a much broader range of possibilities. In order for value to be recognized in *Gesellschaft*, the only necessary thing is the item “to be possessed by one party to the exclusion of another and be desired by one or another individual of this latter part. Apart from this requirement all its other characteristics are insignificant” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 78). It is this desire for what is possessed by another individual that creates the basis for *Gesellschaft*.

Gemeinschaft and *Gesellschaft* exist simultaneously in every society. According to Tönnies, “These concepts signify the model qualities of the essence and the tendencies of being bound together...the essence of both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is found interwoven in all kinds of associations” (1955, p. 18). The distinction between the two is primarily the individual’s basis for action (i.e. natural will or rational will). The natural will of *Gemeinschaft*, embodied in the willingness of community members to work toward the continuation of the community without regard for one’s own personal gain, is rooted in the customs and traditions of the past. Consequently, one may say that in the *Gemeinschaft*, “the future...evolves from the past” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 120). At the same time, the *Gesellschaft* is ruled by rational will and the focus is on what will happen in the future. “Natural will contains the future in embryo or emergent form; rational will contains it [the future] as an image” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 120).

The evolution between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* occurs naturally and its impetus is economics, politics, scientific change, and other phenomena that draw attention away from the *Gemeinschaft* to the opportunities and choices available outside the existing social framework. It is not possible to exist solely within the confines of either of these two extremes. As much or as long as a *Gemeinschaft* may struggle to maintain itself, the natural development of society will push the limits of *Gemeinschaft* until there is a break. The larger the community, the less societal control there will be and without the dedication to traditions and rituals the ties that bind the *Gemeinschaft* will be loosened. Although, according to Tönnies (1955), separation occurs only with “special reasons” (p. 59), those reasons will inevitably lead to the break up of the larger *Gemeinschaft* into subsets of the original. Depending on the number and types of smaller groups, the maintenance of the original center becomes problematic.

The movement of society to *Gesellschaft* is gradual and pockets of *Gemeinschaft* will continue to exist within the *Gesellschaft*. The primary change occurs psychologically (Tönnies, 1955). As members of society gradually come to view their own survival and best interests to be rooted in the successful continuation of the status quo, the politics and economics of the situation will be manipulated by the wealthy and powerful to sustain its own well-being within the society. This manipulation is often not evident to the larger society or middle class bourgeoisie (Tönnies, 1955). By the middle class failing to recognize the *Gesellschaft*, the presence of the *Gesellschaft* is strengthened and more of society will come to view its own best interests tied up in the continuation of the status quo. In the end, Tönnies stated, “The consciousness of the *Gesellschaft* gradually becomes the consciousness of an increasing mass of the people” (1955, pp. 28-29).

As this happens, the entire society gradually comes to reflect the mindset and ideas of the *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1955). But this change is not necessarily in the best interests of the existing *Gesellschaft*. The workers begin to “learn to think and become conscious of the conditions under which they are chained to the labor market. From such knowledge decisions and attempts to break these changes originate” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 194). Now the development of labor unions and political social action organizations begins as workers attempt to share in the wealth and means of production (Tönnies, 1955). With these developments the goal of the working class gradually evolves into obtaining a share in the ownership of capital. If realized, this goal of the working class to obtain a share in the ownership of capital would stop the production of goods and foreign trade and “would mean the end of *Gesellschaft*” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 194).

The fight of the working class for their share of the wealth continues until the class consciousness, brought about by the education originally designed to make better workers, is transformed to class struggle, eventual rebellion, and the potential destruction of society. This destruction, said Tönnies (1955), can only be prevented by the rebirth of the *Gemeinschaft* thus, once again beginning the redevelopment of a new society. Once the entire culture is transformed into a state of *Gesellschaft*, the culture is doomed and can only be resurrected by the redevelopment of the forgotten *Gemeinschaft*. The culture is doomed “if none of its [*Gemeinschaft*] scattered seeds remain alive and again bring forth the essence and idea of *Gemeinschaft*, thus secretly fostering a new culture amidst the decaying one” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 270). The rebirth of *Gemeinschaft* starts in a different place and with different conditions than the previous *Gemeinschaft*, but the ideas of community, fidelity, and honor will be the same and the progression to *Gesellschaft* will begin anew (Tönnies, 1955).

Baudrillard: Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyper-reality

Baudrillard (1929-2007), a controversial French sociologist, challenged much of the social theory of the twentieth century with his use of simulation to explain the progression of society to hyper-reality and the replacement of the “real” with a simulated reality. Simulation, according to Baudrillard (1998), captures and overwhelms the original until it becomes impossible for society to tell the difference between the simulation and the real.

In Baudrillard’s theory, the development of the simulation is far more dangerous to society than dissimulation because dissimulation leaves the reality principle intact, thus affirming the original. With dissimulation “the difference is always clear, it is only masked” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 5). Simulation, on the other hand, takes the idea of reality and subverts it, making it difficult to distinguish the real from the simulation (Baudrillard, 1983). Advertising and media play a big role in subverting the “real” and creating the simulation.

Kim Sawchuck (1994), while working for a Canadian marketing firm, explained simulation from her own perspective as a marketing executive.

If changing the color of the mushroom soup convinced the Canadian shopper that the soup contained more mushrooms, then there were more mushrooms as far as we were concerned. But, as you asked, then what of the objective, discernible referent? We didn’t care. If it made it on the code frame because enough people believed it was true, well it was. Truth had a particular meaning in this business. Wasn’t this the epitome of simulation where signs of the real replace the real? (p. 91)

How Do We Get There? Baudrillard identified four phases in the creation of the simulation (Baudrillard, 1983). Phase one is the reflection of basic reality. In phase two the

reality is masked and perverted. Phase three marks the absence of the original reality and in this phase reality is covered up. In the fourth and final phase the simulation bears no relation to the original reality.

When we get to the point that the simulation has literally replaced the original, we are living in what Baudrillard called hyper-reality. At the point of hyper-reality society loses all connection with the original and the simulation becomes the reality. McFadden (Groh & McFadden, 2000) creates his own example of simulation when he invented the hypothetical Olde Farmer McDonald with his “neatly pressed overall and checked-shirt uniforms, handing out baskets of berries and bananas to patrons and their children” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 70) as an employee of a national CSA franchise. We see what could be the representation of “real” farmers to a society with no context or familiarity with rural farm life. If society begins to believe this is the farmer, well then, according to Baudrillard’s theory, it is the farmer.

It is never easy to identify the difference between the “real” and the simulation. The Olde McDonald illustration shows what can happen when the “real” or original ceases to exist. We can live with the simulation and not recognize the difference (Baudrillard, 1983). For example, Baudrillard said, “Go and simulate a theft in a large department store: How do you convince the security guards that it is a simulated theft? There is no objective difference” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 38). That is the danger of simulation. How does one tell the difference?

“Feigning an illness” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 5) is simply pretending to be ill. Simulating an illness means actually reproducing the symptoms of illness. The individual feigning the illness can be found out or discovered. However, the line between reality and simulation fades for the individual simulating the illness because actual symptoms of illness may be present. In

this way “simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’” (p. 5).

At the point society moves to hyper-reality there is also a change from what Baudrillard called the production order into a consumption order (Baudrillard, 1993). This also marks a progression from use- and exchange-value to sign-value. Thus society begins to consume symbols instead of actual commodities. The consumer is no longer paying for the function of an object, the consumer is paying for what the purchased item signifies or represents (Baudrillard, 1998).

In this consumption order commercial products represent status instead of their use- or exchange- value. A “code,” based on products, status, and use-value is created and it is up to the consumer to read the “code” correctly to understand the symbols that are being exchanged (Baudrillard, 1998). George Ritzer, in his introduction to *The Consumer Society* (Baudrillard, 1998), said that what is actually consumed in the guise of messages and images are signs rather than commodities. This makes it increasingly important for the consumer to be able to “read” the code in order to know what to consume.

Since Baudrillard (1998) assumed the code of consumption was understood, he also assumed the consumer knew the meaning of the choices made when the consumer chose one product over another. This was why Baudrillard said commodities or products are defined by what they represent rather than their actual use. This, in turn, means that what these products represent is not defined by what they do but rather by their “relationship to the entire system of commodities and signs” (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 7).

This exchange of symbols exacerbates the insatiability of consumer society. If society’s only requirement was to satisfy needs, that could be done. But, what people are actually looking

for is differentiation (Baudrillard, 1998). “What people seek in consumption is not so much a particular object as difference and the search for the latter [difference] is unending” (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 7). Thus the process of production and consumption is assured of its role in society.

Needs are created and production gears up only after the distinctive element of the object no longer exists (Baudrillard, 1998). Once the product defined by differentiation is available to the masses, its distinctiveness is gone. It is the attempt to maintain this distance between the upper class and the masses that Baudrillard (1998) said stimulates the introduction of new products and new opportunities of differentiation.

The upper class determines what will next be moved to simulation by what it adopts as the next signifier (Baudrillard, 1998). Once a “distinctive” signifier actually moves to simulation, there is an immediate reaction or movement to the next distinctive signifier. Thus the system reproduces itself and progresses (Baudrillard, 1998). This “progress” is what Baudrillard (as cited by Kellner, 1994), called careening growth and excrescence that pushes society to “a point of inertia and entropy” (p. 15). Kellner (1994) said this unending search for differentiation contributed to Baudrillard's vision of contemporary society that was “expanding and excreting ever more goods, services, information, messages or demands – surpassing all rational ends and boundaries in a spiral of uncontrolled growth and replication” (Kellner, 1994, p. 15).

Just as Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* theory set society on a path from the idyllic to the chaotic, Baudrillard's application of simulation moves society in the same direction but toward hyper-reality. The force driving both theories was a desire for individualism and recognition. For Tönnies it was individualism that drew people away from the *Gemeinschaft*. For Baudrillard what moved society down this continuum was the search for differentiation and

individualism. In both cases technology was identified as a motivator of what society calls progress, but these theories viewed this progress as instigating inevitable chaos.

Press and Arnould - American Pastoralist Ideology

Melea Press and Eric Arnould's (2011) assessment of community supported agriculture is an example of what society frequently views as progress, actually contributing to the continuums suggested by Tönnies' and Baudrillard's theories of societal chaos. Press and Arnould's research of CSA websites suggested that internet access allowed farmers to capitalize on the ideals and images of American pastoralist ideology via their websites. By so doing, CSAs moved from a place of limited countercultural market positioning to full-fledged market legitimacy (Press & Arnould, 2011).

Press and Arnould (2011) equated the growth in the number of community supported agriculture farms with the opportunities the internet gave farmers to create and distribute their marketing message in a more personal and, albeit emblematic, way. This message was the same version of American pastoralist ideology that led to the growth of suburban communities in the 1950s and communes in the 1970s (Press & Arnould, 2011). The proliferation of these pastoral values also fueled the success of community supported agriculture according to Press and Arnould (2011).

By capitalizing on the existing market structures and articulating pastoralist values via their websites, CSAs moved into the marketing mainstream from their countercultural start in the 1980s (Press & Arnould, 2011). Press and Arnould (2011) identified five cultural “codes” used by CSAs in their marketing efforts. One of these “codes” was the development of community which Press and Arnould (2011) compared to the development of suburbia. So, just as suburbia

sold the idea of living in a small community (the way it used to be), so CSAs used the idea of the shareholder/farmer relationship to sell the idea of the way it used to be.

Press and Arnould (2011) saw community supported agriculture positioned in the market as a way to “promote a vision of purification from the ills of industrialization” (p. 186). By capitalizing on consumer fears and ideals, community supported agriculture sold itself as a respite from the industrialization and development permeating society. Part of this respite was participation in a community and nostalgia for a ‘simpler’ time. These were the same desires Press and Arnould (2011) cited as playing a role in the attractiveness of the suburbs and the development of rural communes.

Studying CSA websites in all 50 states, Press and Arnould (2011) identified moral superiority as another of the cultural “codes” CSAs used in their marketing efforts. Using quotes from CSA websites, Press and Arnould (2011) cited examples of farms’ appeals to consumers’ better judgment. Press and Arnould (2011) said the CSA movement has co-opted with the current food industry and turned the CSA product into a consumer good. Consequently, CSAs created a myth turning the purchase of the CSA share into a consumer good, rather than a countercultural “vote” against corporate food. As a result the CSA purchase became a legitimate mainstream consumer choice (Press & Arnould, 2011).

It was the internet, according to Press and Arnould (2011), that facilitated the development of community supported agriculture by making it possible for farmers to communicate with shareholders “personally” and generate the “perception of shared community.” With a presence on the web, farms developed more personal communication with shareholders. This communication allowed farms to effectively “exploit the first person

narrative” (Press and Arnould, 2011, p. 186) and create a perception of community or a restoration of Gemeinschaft.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained a review of the relevant literature related to community supported agriculture. The literature presented the following themes: the history of community supported agriculture, the position of community supported agriculture as a participant in the small business environment, and the potential future of community supported agriculture. I also included literature related to other ideas connected to community supported agriculture in terms of the role of community in community supported agriculture, the motivations of CSA farmers and shareholders, and how CSAs play into the idea of the counterculture. In addition, this chapter also presented the three theoretical frameworks from which I analyzed and categorized the data I collected. My selected theorists include Ferdinand Tönnies, Jean Baudrillard, and Dawn Melea Press and Eric Arnould.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate and understand a topic from the point of view of a participant or participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The qualitative process is not an effort to explain a topic or formalize specific questions or hypotheses, but to understand and describe the topic within its own context. The researcher must approach the topic with a clean slate, letting go of preconceived ideas and notions about what makes up or influences the topic.

Starting from this point the researcher begins the most important component of any qualitative research project and that is listening. The in-depth interviews and participant observations are not structured and questions are open-ended. These open-ended questions allow the interviewees to respond to the questions from their own frame of reference, the goal of every qualitative researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Qualitative research is used for a host of different reasons and situations. Just a few of the reasons for using qualitative research according to Cresswell (2007) include giving individuals an opportunity to share their stories, obtaining a detailed understanding of complex issues, developing theories when only partial or incomplete theories exist, or understanding contexts or settings from study participants to address a problem or issue. All of these are possible reasons for using the qualitative method, but the researcher must also be aware that qualitative study requires a strong commitment to study the research question, extensive time in the field, time to analyze collected data, and time to process and prepare the final analysis (Cresswell, 2007).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) list five characteristics of qualitative research. First, the research is naturalistic. Which means the research occurs in the same setting where the research

topic actually occurs. This provides the researcher with a more “in context” experience. Second, the research is descriptive. There is not a lot of quantitative questioning or scoring involved.

The topic is explained using words and pictures.

Third, outcomes are secondary to the process. The researcher is exploring how people do things. Why do people make the choices they make? What unseen (or unsuspected) factors may influence decisions or results? These things are not explained by the outcome, but by the process.

Fourth, qualitative research is inductive. Generalizations are drawn as a consequence of what is learned during the research project. Theory develops “from the bottom up” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). Finally, qualitative research has meaning. As qualitative researchers we are interested in “how other people make sense of their lives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 7).

After considering each of these five characteristics of qualitative research together, the researcher’s next step is to decide the best type of qualitative research to address the topic. I chose a phenomenological study to look at the idea of community in the context of community supported agriculture.

Phenomenology

“Perception of the reality of an object is dependent on a subject” according to Moustakas (1994, p. 27). For the qualitative researcher this means that “reality” as it is normally defined will depend on the subject being observed or interviewed. This very idea should introduce an element of surprise and anticipation to a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology, as a method of qualitative research, requires researchers to begin from scratch, taking the opportunity to learn about the experience while remaining separated as much as possible from their own ideas about the experience. Surprise should be part of the researcher’s experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For me, the phenomenological methodology

seemed the best way to integrate the community supported agriculture experience from both the farmers' and the shareholders' perspectives.

The CSA experience, from the farmers' and the shareholders' perspective, represents two different viewpoints, but an important shared experience. This combination of perspectives reflects the definition given by Creswell (2007) in which he described a phenomenological study as an investigation of several people with a shared experience. The shared experience, for some CSA shareholders, may only be the weekly vegetable pickup from the drop site. In other cases, especially with on-farm pickup, there may be a weekly interaction and ongoing conversation between farmer and shareholder. Depending on the type of CSA, an actual meeting between the farmer and shareholder may never occur. But even in the situation where farmer and shareholder do not meet, there are expectations and obligations and a relationship based on trust.

Just as Moustakas (1994) predicted, it is always possible to find multiple realities with respect to these expectations and obligations. These multiple realities made it difficult to tease out exactly what shareholders expected based on what they said and the contracts or agreements they entered into with the farmer. The farmers' perspective appeared easier to understand at the outset. However, time muddied the farmers' perspectives with expectations as well. At first I assumed the idea of community was part of those expectations and obligations, but, in the end, the idea of community was not always apparent from either perspective.

Since the concept of community is somewhat nebulous, it was necessary to be especially mindful of the human tendency of the researcher to see (or hear) what is expected to be seen (or heard). Teasing out the occurrences of community in interactions and interviews with farmers and shareholders required patience, thought, and awareness. I followed the process laid out by Creswell (2007) that begins with a question to study, an examination of current literature, asking

questions, analyzing responses, and documenting what I found. This process describes the most important steps of qualitative research.

In a phenomenological study, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) the “researchers act as if they do not know what it [the research subject] means and study it to find out what is actually taken for granted” (p. 25). In the beginning the business side of community supported agriculture did not seem particularly important. As I continued my research, however, looking at the farm not as a business required effort, just as described by Moustakas (1994). Although the ultimate viability and sustainability of the CSA model was something that was frequently an object of reflection for me, in time the business side of things did slip back into the background.

Frequently people do not associate the idea of community with business or with community supported agriculture. However, even though the basis for this economic exchange was significantly less formal than a straight up retail purchase, one was never far away from the expectations and ideas of capitalism. This was true from the perspectives of both farmers and shareholders. Consequently, I had to tease out of the data the notion that one could find “community” in this setting. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described the process of teasing out these data as finding reality as it is understood by humans in the way that the reality is perceived by humans. Bogdan and Biklen also said, “We live in our imaginations, [where] settings are more symbolic than concrete” (p. 26).

Although I sometimes attempted to direct the attention of study participants to the relationship between CSA shareholders and farmers, I also needed to explore whether or not this shareholder/farmer relationship was actually a tangible relationship. If there was a tangible relationship, then I wanted to investigate if this aspect correlated with the shareholders’ perceptions of this relationship in terms of community. Consequently, in this phenomenological

study it was necessary to understand the reality, both in the tangible relationship and in the perception or imagination of CSA shareholders and farmers. As a phenomenological study, the focus was on what the study participants perceived as real and how study participants experienced community within the CSA setting.

Exploring this perception of community meant looking at the idea of community subjectively to first determine what represented community to study participants. Whether shareholders or farmers, each participant had their own ideas about what community meant, especially in a business relationship. The purchased product, a box of vegetables, which represented the most tangible aspect of the relationship, did not mean the same thing to each shareholder. Just as Moustakas (1994) said, perception of reality depends on the subject. Participant ideas represented their individual realities and I, as the researcher, needed to interpret their meanings as accurately as possible.

In this study phenomenology helped describe the individual perceptions of “community” experienced by farmers and shareholders in a variety of life situations. These perceptions, whether personal, professional, political, or emotional, were the things that ultimately impacted the lived experience of farmers and shareholders. In this study what was seen as the reality (the box of vegetables) was not always what was actually exchanged. In some cases, for the farmer the business aspect of the farm merged the idea of community and economic survival. To the shareholder, in some cases, the concept of community seemed to have little or no significance and the box of vegetables represented a strictly contractual relationship based on the convenience of the pickup site. Sometimes the idea of community supported agriculture for both the farmer and the shareholder represented an alternative to the current commercial offerings in today’s marketplace. The box of vegetables represented a political, economic, and health statement. In

the end, however, it appeared to be the relationship itself that engendered community for the shareholders. It will potentially be this relationship and the idea of community that will sustain the “business” of community supported agriculture in the future.

Approached as a phenomenological study, teasing out what the box of vegetables really represented required that I approach each interview as a “first time” experience. In other words I needed to approach each interview as the first time I asked the questions and first time I heard the answers. Moustakas (1994) described how this teasing out should be done in a phenomenological study. His approach included the selection of a topic to be studied, bracketing out the researcher’s personal experiences, and then collecting data from several persons experiencing the phenomenon.

Using the Moustakas (1994) approach, upon completion of the data collection, the researcher first reviews and analyzes the data. This step in the process involves combining and reducing the data into significant statements and excerpts. Using the results from this step, the researcher identifies themes from the data. The next step in the Moustakas (1994) approach develops these themes into what Moustakas called textural and structural descriptions. The textural descriptions depict the experience of the participant and the structural descriptions explain the overall situation or context of the participant’s experience. This, Moustakas (1994) said, conveys the fundamental nature of the experience.

Bracketing out my experience meant that I needed to approach each interview as if it was the first time I had asked the questions and the first time I heard the ideas expressed by the interviewee. The idea of clearing my mind of previous experiences, ideas, and impressions with regard to this box of vegetables and idea of community needed to be uppermost in the interview process. Before each phone call I would take a few minutes and remember what I thought when

I first heard about CSAs. Back then I was intrigued by the CSA concept, but I did not think I would ever purchase a CSA share because I thought a CSA purchase was just too risky. Sometimes it was hard to remember what it was like way back then, but keeping an open mind was a key element in beginning to understand the meaning of community in community supported agriculture. It was always humbling to remember what it was like before I knew what I know now.

Data Study Sample

Five farms participated in my study during the 2011 and 2012 CSA seasons and my farm recruitment efforts covered both seasons, focusing on farmers participating in CSA Fairs held at Food Cooperatives in the Metropolitan Area. I also recruited one farmer from the 2011 Living Green Expo, an annual expo featuring local environmentally-friendly businesses and entrepreneurs. Using these types of CSA sales events as the staging area for my recruitment insured that I was talking with farms serving the Metropolitan Area.

A CSA listing on the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) website included 64 CSAs in the State of Minnesota in 2011. This listing included only farms registering with and paying the LSP for inclusion on the listing, so the count was approximate. My limiting criteria of farms serving the Metropolitan Area reduced the LSP sample pool by approximately 25% to 48 possible farms. My selection pool was further narrowed by the farmers actually attending these CSA sales events for which pre-registration with the food cooperative was the only requirement.

Farm Research Timeline. My research covered different time frames in two CSA seasons. I completed three farm visits and farmer interviews in the spring of 2011 under an IRB from my Dissertation Qualitative Research class (see Appendix A). The bulk of my research, including additional farm visits, farmer interviews, and shareholder interviews was completed in late

Table 1

Farmers Participating During 2011 and 2012 CSA Seasons

Farm	Gender	Age	Age of Farm	Survey Distributed?	Participant Observation	Owner/ Manager	CSA Season
First Year Farm	F	Early 30's	First Year	No	Participant Observation	Farm Owner	2011 Only
Township Farm	M	Early 40's	Nine Years	Yes	Participant Observation	Farm Owner	2011 and 2012
Neighborhood Farm	M & F	Mid 20's	Two Years	Yes	Participant Observation	Owner Leasing Land	2012 Only
Classic Lake Farm	M	Early 30's	Four Years	Yes	Interview Only	Farm Manager	2012 Only
Urban Farm	F	Late 30's	Two Years	No	Interview Only	Farm Manager	2011 Only

summer and fall of 2012. One farm participated in both the 2011 and 2012 CSA seasons. See Table 1 for additional information about participating farms and farmers.

Farmer Recruitment – 2011 CSA Season. I attended the Living Green Expo in May 2011 not realizing CSA farms would be exhibiting at the Expo. However, that year 23 CSA farms were featured in one of the Exhibition halls. Although I did not come to the Expo with the intention of recruiting farmers, one of the farmers I met at the Expo, Jeffrey of Township Farm, participated in both the 2011 and 2012 CSA seasons.

I also attended CSA fairs sponsored by Metropolitan Area Food Cooperatives on Saturdays in April. The CSA farmers registering with the Cooperative were invited to set up their marketing materials and talk to interested shoppers. In 2011, I attended two CSA Fairs.

I arrived at my first fair just 20 minutes before the scheduled closing time. The room was empty except for the farmers who were beginning to pick up their brochures and getting ready to leave. I arrived at the other fair 40-50 minutes after the starting time. This fair was crowded both with farmers and shoppers.

I knew these fairs would be my only real opportunity to actually talk to farmers about participating in my study because once the growing season started, the farmers' time would be limited. At the fairs I approached farmers and briefly described my study. If the farmers expressed an interest, I said I would follow up with an email when I was ready to begin my research.

I followed up with the farmers via email (see Appendix B) after the approval of the IRB for my Qualitative Research Class in June 2011. Since this was late spring I knew the farmers would be busy and I was pleasantly surprised to receive responses from three farmers, Jeffrey from Township Farm, Jackie from Urban Farm, and Serena from First Year Farm, within two or three days of my email. Two of these farms, Township Farm and First Year Farm, were privately owned CSA farms and one of the farms, Urban Farm, was part of a nonprofit organization.

My research activities for Township Farm and First Year Farm involved participant observations and working interviews. For these interviews after receiving the signed Consent Form (see Appendix C), I strapped a digital recorder to my arm and spent the day working with the farmer. My work responsibilities included weeding, hoeing, picking potato beetles, harvesting peas, radishes, beets, squash, and scallions, transplanting brassicas and melons, laying drip tape, washing vegetables and weighing vegetables, and packing boxes for distribution.

The third farm from one of the 2011 CSA Fairs, Urban Farm, was just beginning its second year as a part of a fund-raising and community-building project of a nonprofit

neighborhood organization. My interaction with this farm included only a sit-down interview with the principal farmer. The farm scheduled regular volunteer work days every Thursday and Saturday, but I did not take advantage of those opportunities, despite my good intentions. I remained on Urban Farm's email list and received regular emails about the ancillary activities offered as part of the CSA's community-building outreach activities.

Farmer Recruitment – 2012 CSA Season. In April 2012 I attended two more CSA fairs and I recruited one new farm, Neighborhood Farm. This farm was a new urban farm that was the result of a merger between three separate urban farms from the 2011 CSA season. By pooling resources, the group of farmers hoped to have a broader appeal. Neighborhood Farm benefited from a lot of local publicity during the summer of 2012 being featured in the Metropolitan Area newspaper and on the local television news. In addition, because several of the farmers were graduates of a local University, the farm was featured on the front cover of the University's summer Alumni Newsletter. This farm did not hesitate to participate in my study. They told me later they were participating in several studies about urban agriculture from other universities in the Metropolitan Area.

I was already acquainted with the second farm I recruited during 2012. Classic Lake Farm was part of a nonprofit organization with which I became acquainted in 2009. I met the executive director of the nonprofit at a lecture by Joel Salatin, a farmer featured in Michael Pollan's 2006 book, *Omnivore's Dilemma*. During the summer of 2010 I also purchased a fruit share from Classic Lake Farm. In 2012 I followed up with the executive director of the organization and he connected me with the farm manager with whom I conducted a sit-down interview at the end of the CSA season.

The third farm from the 2012 season, Township Farm, also participated during the 2011 CSA season. As with my 2011 research, my 2012 season included two privately-owned farms, Neighborhood Farm and Township Farm, for which I did participant observations. The third CSA, Classic Lake Farm, being part of a larger nonprofit organization included an interview with the farm manager. See Appendix D for a list of farmer interview questions.

Shareholder Survey – 2012 CSA Season. The farms participating during the 2012 CSA season also distributed a three-page survey to shareholders with one of the farm's weekly distributions. I provided a sample email for farmers to send to their shareholders describing my study and the survey (see Appendix E). To my knowledge none of the farmers used my sample email. I know Township Farm and Classic Lake Farm, included information about my study in the Farmer's weekly blog post. I did not see any reference to my study in the blog post for Neighborhood Farm.

The farmers distributed my survey packet, which included the survey, a copy of the Confidentiality Agreement, and an open letter explaining my research, to shareholders. I also included a self-addressed, stamped envelope to make returning the survey as convenient as possible. See Appendices F, G, and H for the Confidentiality Agreement, Open Shareholder Letter, and Survey. Although the surveys themselves were anonymous, I color coded the surveys from each farm to facilitate sorting the surveys when they arrived in the mail.

Shareholder Recruitment 2012 CSA Season. When distributing the survey, I included a description of my study in the shareholder letter telling participants their responses were anonymous. I also said I was looking for volunteer interviewees willing to talk about their CSA experience. I specified in the letter that the farmer would receive the aggregated survey data at the end of my study but this would not include any identifying information even if the

Table 2

First Round CSA Shareholder Interviewees From 2012 CSA Season

Participant	Farm	Age	Important to know Farmer?	Years w/ CSA	Share Pickup	Attend CSA Social Events
Brandy	Neighborhood	40-59	Agree Somewhat	First Year	On Farm	Yes
Betty	Neighborhood	19-39	Agree Somewhat	First Year	On Farm	Yes
Maggie	Township	40-59	Agree Somewhat	Second Year	On Farm	No
Amanda	Township	19-39	Strongly Agree	First Year	On Farm	No
Lynn	Township	19-39	Agree Somewhat	First Year	On Farm	No
Daniel	Classic Lake	40-59	Strongly Agree	Five+ Years	Drop Site	Yes
Kaari	Classic Lake	60+	Strongly Agree	First Year	Drop Site	Yes

shareholder volunteered to be interviewed. Based on reported shareholder numbers from each farm, I provided the three farmers with 290 surveys for distribution. I received 151 returned surveys. Since the farmers distributed the surveys themselves, I do not know definitely how many of the shareholders actually received surveys.

First Round of Shareholder Interviews – 2012 CSA Season. Fifty shareholders included their contact information with the returned surveys. I sent out my first round of 18 emails requesting telephone interviews in early December 2012 (see Appendix I). This was later than I planned and I was concerned about response time because of the upcoming Christmas holiday. I gave volunteers a two-week period during which I said I would do my best to accommodate their

schedules. I received eight responses from shareholders volunteering to talk to me about their CSA experience. I sent each shareholder a follow up email arranging a date and time for our phone interview. This email also included a list of potential interview questions (see Appendix J) and a copy of the Shareholder Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix K).

I was not able to arrange all the interviews within the original two-week timeframe, but I scheduled alternate times for those interviews. Four of the seven first-round telephone interviews were done in the evening or during the weekend and the remaining three interviews were done during the work day. One interview had to be rescheduled because the participant had not included her phone number with the survey or on the Confidentiality Agreement. At the rescheduled time I realized this shareholder still had not sent me her phone number. I emailed the participant at the scheduled interview time and gave her my phone number. She called almost immediately to complete the interview. I was not able to connect with one volunteer and after three attempts I dropped her from my list. See Table 2 for a list of Round One Shareholder Interviewees.

Second Round of Shareholder Interviews – 2012 CSA Season. As an additional element of data collection I attended a CSA Farm Conference in January 2013. One of the sessions focused almost entirely on CSAs using social media (particularly Facebook) to “build community” among shareholders. The emphasis on social media surprised me because in the returned surveys more than half of the respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statement “I follow my farmer on Facebook or Twitter.” Yet in this conference session the idea of social media was described as vital to the very survival of the farm. I wondered if I was missing something. After reviewing my data I decided an additional round of shareholder telephone interviews was necessary.

Table 3

Second Round CSA Shareholder Interviewees from 2012 CSA Season

Participant	Farm	Age	Important to know Farmer?	Years w/ CSA	Share Pickup	Attend CSA Social Events
Bonnie	Township	40-59	Strongly Agree	Five+ Years	On Farm	Yes
Beth	Classic Lake	19-39	Disagree Somewhat	4 th Year	Drop Site	No
Jessica	Classic Lake	60+	Agree Somewhat	4 th Year	On Farm	No
Mary	Classic Lake	40-59	Agree Somewhat	2 nd Year	On Farm	Yes
Marla	Classic Lake	60+	Strongly Agree	Five+ Years	Changed to Drop Site	Yes
Kris	Township	40-59	Strongly Agree	4 th Year	On Farm	No

Because of the elapsed timeframe since the completion of my original IRB application, I filed an amended IRB application requesting to extend the follow up timeframe for shareholder interviews (see Appendix L and M). I received IRB approval for these modifications in late February. I went back to the remaining 32 volunteers I had not previously contacted and sent an additional 14 emails to randomly selected shareholders requesting telephone interviews. The emails were sent on March 1, 2013 (see Appendix N).

I specifically stated in this email that I was interested in how participants used social media in connection with their farm. I received three immediate responses. Ten days later I sent

a follow up email to the 11 volunteers from whom I had not received a return email. In response to this follow up email I received five shareholder responses for a total of eight respondents.

I sent each of the eight respondents a follow up email to arrange a date and time for our interview. I included a list of social media questions and the revised Shareholder Confidentiality Agreement in this email (see Appendices O and P). Out of this pool I conducted six telephone interviews. I was not able to arrange an interview time with two of the respondents. Table 3 summarizes the shareholders with whom I conducted Round Two interviews.

In my emails I specifically said I wanted to talk about how the shareholders used social media in connection with their CSA. However, none of the shareholders responding to my email followed their farm on Facebook or Twitter. Only one of the eight respondents had a Facebook account with which she followed her children, but she did not follow her farm. At first I thought an additional round of recruiting emails would be required. However, after reviewing the interviews, I decided that the fact none of these shareholders used social media was useful information about the use of social media in and of itself. There are several possible explanations about the results of these responses that I address in Chapter Four.

All Shareholder Interviews. Shareholder interviews were not recorded. I took notes using shorthand, a valuable skill I learned in high school, and transcribed the conversations immediately after the interviews were completed. All but two of the interviews were completed within 20 to 40 minutes. Two of the interviews were more than an hour in length. The longer conversations, however, were not focused on the shareholder's CSA experience as much as on the shareholders' previous work experiences tangentially related to agriculture and childhood farm experiences. I did not transcribe these parts of the interviews.

Additional Data Collection

In addition to farmer and shareholder interviews, I gathered data from other farm and environmental resources.

Survey. As mentioned earlier I distributed hard copy surveys to the three farms participating in my study during the 2012 CSA season. I originally planned to use SurveyMonkey.com, a free online survey website, and collect survey responses online. However, I did not feel comfortable requesting access to the farmers' email lists and I did not believe that shareholders would take the time to navigate to the survey without the electronic link one normally finds imbedded in an email. I decided a paper survey would be more visible and had a greater potential to be completed and dropped in the mail. I gave 290 surveys to the farmers for distribution to shareholders with one week's share.

I entered all results, including shareholder comments, into an Excel spreadsheet. At first I considered the shareholders who volunteered for more in-depth interviews to be the most important data result from the survey. I set the spreadsheet aside and focused on my interviews. It was only after I had completed most of my analysis (and my dissertation chair questioned me about the survey results) that I went back to the spreadsheet and realized what a treasure trove of data the survey actually represented. After reviewing my survey results in more detail, I took the comments and sorted them based on my existing themes and elements. I then went back and regrouped the comments within my element groupings. It was an interesting exercise and caused me to go back and rewrite part of my Findings chapter.

Lecture - Secrets of the Soil. I attended a lecture about soil at the Bell Museum in Minneapolis, MN, in December 2012. This lecture by Professor Terence H. Cooper from the University Minnesota's Department of Soil, Water, and Climate, explained the development of

the more than 90,000 different types of soil in the U.S. This lecture provided interesting insights into how and why CSA farmers tend the soil on their farms with such respect.

CSA Webinar. In addition to farmer and shareholder interviews I also participated in a webinar sponsored by FarmCommons.org focusing on legal issues involved with CSA farming. Webinar discussion topics included insurance, employee compensation, and sales contracts for small and startup CSA farms.

The webinar was participatory and several interesting conversations occurred during the 90-minute meeting. We were assured on three occasions we would receive transcripts of the webinar so we did not have to take notes. Instead, we should spend our time concentrating on the webinar itself. I did not take notes. That was a mistake.

Instead of transcripts, however, we received copies of the PowerPoint slides. The slides did not include any of the question and answer portions of the conversation or any detail about the issues raised during the webinar. The webinar provided some helpful background information, however, since I did not document any of the question and answer portion of the webinar, none of the webinar vignettes were available for use in my dissertation.

CSA Conference. I attended one day of a two-day CSA Conference sponsored by the Wisconsin Farmers Union in January 2013. There were four session tracks, Beginning CSA Farming, Production, Packing and Distribution Logistics, Building and Cultivating Community, and Financial Management and Planning Ideas. I attended the track for Community Building. Although I did not interview any farmers at this conference, I participated in the Noon Plenary Session which included small group discussions on challenges and advantages of being a CSA farmer.

I took extensive notes, again using shorthand, during all of the class sessions and the noon plenary session. I transcribed my notes as soon as I arrived home. Once the notes were transcribed, I opened another spreadsheet and coded my conference notes like my other interviews.

Community Gathering. In July 2012 I attended a community event for Urban Farm. This event featured a Metropolitan Area City Council member who sponsored the Community Garden legislation passed by the Council in 2011. This legislation gave nonprofit organizations like Urban Farm the right to develop community gardens on vacant city lots deemed undevelopable by the City. Approximately 25 people attended this open potluck event. I arrived late and was not present during the introductions so I do not know how many of the attendees were CSA members or employees, or how many were simply interested members of the community.

Other community-building activities organized by Urban Farm included movie nights, yoga classes, and volunteer requests. This CSA also sponsored several “Chef in a Box” events for which a local chef prepared a meal using the items in the current week’s CSA box. I did not attend any other Urban Farm community-building activities.

Strawberry Day at My CSA. In June 2011 I attended Strawberry Day at my CSA farm. Although this farm was not a participant in my study, I interviewed the farmer/owner in June 2009 for a class project. It was this interview that initially sparked my interest in community supported agriculture as a dissertation topic. This CSA event was the first such event I attended as a CSA member and it gave me an opportunity to view my own CSA experience of “community” from a CSA member's perspective. Coincidentally, the day I interviewed my CSA

farmer in 2009 was the Friday before Strawberry Day. So I was particularly aware of the work and preparation that went into this member event and how important this event was to the farmer.

This strawberry event was a “You Pick” event. The first two pounds of strawberries were free for shareholders. Additional berries could be picked and purchased for three dollars per pound. The event also included a potluck lunch and a farm tour. In addition, after the farm tour there was strawberry ice cream made by a local dairy whose cheeses were featured in the farm's Cheese Share.

In early 2013 I sent an email to this farmer requesting permission to use some of the interview quotes from my 2009 interview. The farmer responded to my email requesting that I refresh his memory about the topics we covered during the interview. I sent the farmer a list of the topics and some of his quotes. The farmer did not respond to this email. I sent one follow up email asking if he had reviewed the summary of my notes. I did not receive any response to my email and I removed all other references to the 2009 interview from my dissertation.

Farm Descriptions

Township Farm – 2011 and 2012 CSA Seasons. Township Farm participated during both the 2011 and 2012 CSA seasons. As a 2012 participant, Township Farm also distributed the shareholder survey and had the highest percentage of returned surveys. During my participant observations and working interviews, Farmer Jeffrey and I spent hours talking about farming, CSA participation, community, and other non-farm related topics.

I met Jeffrey at the Living Green Expo in May 2011. Twenty-three CSA farmers with booths that ranged from the obviously homemade with tag board and pictures to the expensive trade show displays built for larger, more corporate conferences were spread out in the Exhibition Hall. Jeffrey's display was a very small homemade display. One of the things I

noticed first was that Jeffrey was dressed as I expected a farmer to be dressed. He was wearing blue jeans, a plaid shirt, denim jacket, and work boots. He looked like the farmers from home.

Jeffrey said his farm was one of the only “true” CSAs at the Expo because all of his farm’s produce went to his shareholders. For the other farms, he said, when there was a good harvest the shareholder did not get anything extra or any benefit because the extra produce would go to the farmers market or be sold to a local grocery store. All of Township Farm’s produce, on the other hand, would be distributed to the shareholders. According to Jeffrey, for most farms the shareholder only shared in the risk and not in the bounty.

Jeffrey also said the vegetables in the CSA boxes would be the “seconds” because farmers would save the best looking vegetables for the farmers market. Although Jeffrey used this sales pitch for his farm, in all my visits to other CSA farms the CSA box was always the top priority for receiving the best of the best produce. At no time did I see or hear anything to support Jeffrey's assertions about CSA boxes getting the “seconds.” Jeffrey’s sales pitch was effective with his own shareholders and this was the subject of several written comments on the surveys returned from his farm. The shareholders appreciated the idea that they were receiving all the produce raised on the farm.

Jeffrey said he would be willing to participate in my study and promptly responded to my email after my first IRB was approved. That led to three participant observation farm visits during the 2011 and 2012 CSA seasons, two in the spring and one in the fall.

When I arrived on Jeffrey’s farm for my first visit I realized he was savvy about marketing and image. Gone was the “farmer” image I expected. He came out of the house wearing a t-shirt and jeans. Even though I knew it had nothing to do with being a farmer, I was

initially disappointed because he did not look like the farmer I met at the Expo, nor did he look like the farmers I remembered from home.

Appearances are important and I realized the farmer image from the Living Green Expo served a marketing purpose. I later learned he spent several years in the high tech industry in California. He put that experience to good use with his website and his use of social media. His farm was by far the most active with social media and he had the most comprehensive and entertaining blog and website. Several shareholders commented about how much they enjoyed reading Jeffrey's newsletters and blog posts.

Township Farm was located in an unincorporated township approximately 20 minutes from the Metropolitan Area. The farm had abutting neighbors some of whom were conventional farmers and some of whom lived in very large, relatively new homes. I actually drove by Township Farm three times before I found the driveway entrance. I was expecting a sign or some "commercial" indication of the farm. There was no sign.

As I turned into the gravel driveway lined on both sides with trees there was a small yellow house immediately on my left. This was the original house when Jeffrey purchased the farm. He built a new house a few years ago farther up the driveway. The old "house" was now fitted with a walk-in cooler and was used as a packing shed. A small tent was also attached on one end of the house for the on-farm vegetable pickup. Since the majority of shareholders pick up on the farm, the location of tent and walk-in cooler was particularly convenient.

Jeffrey started his CSA farm in 2002 after he and his wife moved back from California. The move to Minnesota meant they would have room for his wife's horses and his wife was looking for an opportunity to start her own business. However circumstances left both Jeffrey and his wife without employment and expecting a baby. Jeffrey was wondering what to do and

as he looked out over the 20 acres he and his wife just purchased, he decided he could farm. Jeffrey has been farming ever since.

Until the 2011 season, Township Farm grew every year. In 2011, however, Jeffrey did not sell all of his available shares for the first time. (Jeffrey did sell out for the 2012 season.) Originally Jeffrey sold individual shares. That meant if there were two or three people in the household, the recommended purchase would be two shares. Four or five individuals in a household would, depending on eating habits, require the purchase of three or four shares. This setup allowed shareholders to determine their own subscription level depending on their household and also addressed the difficulty of shareholder requests for half shares.

However, Jeffrey dropped this subscription method of selling shares to new shareholders because it was difficult to explain the process for the on-farm pickups. When Jeffrey posted the pickup amounts for a single share, some shareholders did not understand how to calculate their pickup amounts if they had multiple shares. Some, even though they had purchased multiple shares, only picked up the posted amounts. This led to some disgruntled shareholders because they thought they were not getting a fair amount of produce. Consequently Jeffrey replaced the individual share idea with two levels - a Couple's Share (for two or three individuals) or a Family Share (for four or five individuals).

Jeffrey worked with other local farmers and offered his shareholders a wide range of other products including free-range meat, fruit, cheese, and eggs. Most of the products were sourced locally from other organic producers in his area. Several shareholders mentioned this range of available products as one of the positive aspects of being a shareholder of Township Farms. In one case, according to the farm website, Jeffrey experienced some difficulty with providing some of the locally sourced products due to issues with the local providers.

Jeffrey did not have organic certification, but raised his crops without the use of synthetic chemicals. As a CSA-only farm Jeffrey did not want to spend the time or money obtaining organic certification. He told shareholders that since he was always available for their questions or “inspections” he chose to opt out of the organic certification although he did use organic farming practices. In interviewing Township Farm shareholders most, but not all, were aware of this distinction. Most participants referred to the vegetables they received as organic.

Township Farm had two full-time summer employees and two part-time summer employees. Employees worked an eight to nine hour day, sometimes longer in the height of the growing season. Jeffrey made an effort to not work on the weekends; this was the most “unfarm” feature of this farm. On farm pickups were scheduled for Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. The Monday afternoon pickup gave Jeffrey a chance to harvest the crops needing to be harvested after the weekend and the Friday pickup cleaned the fields to the extent possible before the weekend. Shareholders had a designated pickup day, but they were allowed to switch days with advance notice.

Although Jeffrey said all produce grown on the farm went to the shareholders, in 2009 the potato crop on the farm was significantly larger than could be distributed to shareholders. That year Jeffrey delivered more than 3000 pounds of potatoes to the local food shelf. This “difficulty” is one of the problems with CSA-only farms; sometimes there is just too much. Each shareholder would have received 30 pounds of potatoes for three weeks to distribute all the potatoes raised on the farm. This was also a difficulty mentioned by other CSA farmers when I brought up the 100% CSA model. Most of them needed produce leaving the farm more frequently than their one-time or two-times per week distribution. When the produce was ready to be harvested, farmers needed somewhere to go with their vegetables.

Classic Lake Farm – 2012 CSA Season. Classic Lake Farm was located in a forest outside of the Metropolitan Area. I interviewed Erik, the farm manager, at the end of the CSA season. He was just sitting back and catching his breath. There were only two deliveries remaining in the 2012 season and for the most part his work was done. Blonde and blue-eyed, Erik looked too young for all his years of experience (both farming and not farming).

In conjunction with the forest location, the buildings on the farm all looked like log cabins, so actually determining which building was the office was almost a guess. Once I found the office, my conversation with Erik started while we were standing in the middle of a big room with desks and tables and lots of junk lying around. This was the farm office, but it looked like the kind of office where the work is actually done someplace other than the office. After the first 20 minutes, Erik asked if I wanted to sit down and with that I had an opportunity to get my recorder out and start recording our conversation.

I knew about Classic Lake Farm because two years earlier I purchased a fruit share from the farm. I never mentioned to Erik that I had previously been a customer since it was a fruit share and not a vegetable share. Seeing the office now and understanding where and how the organization and work was done, I was more appreciative of all the work that went into the emails and newsletters I received.

Classic Lake CSA was part of a larger organization and the CSA was originally assumed to be a primary funding source for the organization. However, the increased competition and the unpredictability of the CSA revenues made this arrangement an impractical (and unreliable) funding source. The 145 shares sold by Classic Lake CSA allowed the farm to be self-sustaining, but did not generate a large amount of operating capital. The farm deliberately

reduced the number of shares from more than 400 to 145 because Erik only agreed to take the job as farm manager after the expectations for generating operating capital were removed.

In addition to farming for the CSA, Erik also helped with the other offerings and training programs provided by the larger organization. During the summer it was a challenge for Erik to find the time to provide this additional assistance. But, Erik also received assistance with the farming from the organization in terms of funding and some of the physical labor needs of the farm.

When I met with Erik there was no important fieldwork to be done and he had some assistance with the harvesting for the next week's distribution so we had an opportunity to just talk. Erik was finishing up his fourth year as the farm manager/farmer. When he first arrived he said the work was overwhelming because there was so much employee turnover from the previous year. Erik said he was still overwhelmed in the summer with responsibilities that included farming, writing the newsletter, working with the larger organization, and managing all the other CSA business.

Erik lived on the farm with his wife and two young children. He loved his job which combined not only his interest in farming, but also his interest in international social justice. After college Erik spent a few years in Guatemala working with a social justice organization. But he said he got tired of always being negative and decided he wanted to come back to the U.S. "I decided to farm" he said. "I mean what could be more positive than that?" The larger organization with which Classic Lake CSA was associated was also involved in international social justice issues, so it was a good match for Erik.

An eight-foot deer fence, finished in 2011, surrounded approximately 60 acres of farmland. At any given time only about a quarter of this fenced-in area was under cultivation

and the remaining land was planted in cover crop. The cultivated area shifted every year to give the soil a chance to rest before it was put into production again. Erik loved to talk about the cover crop. As with most of the farms I visited amending the soil and planting and cultivating the cover crop was a frequent topic of discussion.

The fenced-in area also had access to a water spigot every quarter of an acre for irrigation purposes. The irrigation system was just completed for the 2012 CSA season which was particularly helpful because of the drought and excessive heat during that growing season. I interviewed Erik just before the last two CSA distributions for the year and he said the availability of irrigation made a real difference with his spring recruiting efforts. He said potential CSA shareholders asked questions about irrigation more frequently that spring than in previous years.

There were three greenhouses, an outside washing area for cleaning vegetables and a walk-in cooler nearly full of root vegetables. Erik said he tried to clean up and organize the cooler every week, but it was hard to do get along with everything else. In addition to these buildings, Erik used the other buildings on the farm, a barn and machine shed, for his own chickens, goats, and pigs.

The house Erik and his family lived in was within walking distance of the farm. It was a romantic setting with the farm and the house surrounded by forest. “Yesterday” Erik said, “I came to shut the chickens in at night and it was dark in the woods, but the sky was bright. I just brought my penny whistle and played it as I came down for the chickens...”

Neighborhood Farm – 2012 CSA Season. According to the Neighborhood Farm website, farming was a political statement for these farmers. This group of young urban farmers transformed vacant city lots into spaces for growing food and educating neighbors.

Neighborhood Farm was actually a combination of three small urban farms. During the previous CSA season these farms stimulated a lot of cooperation and support amongst themselves and they decided to merge their resources for the 2012 season. During the 2012 season the newly merged Neighborhood Farm cultivated 17 empty lots in the Metropolitan Area. They also sold their vegetables to restaurants and at the Organic Food Farmers Market in addition to their weekly CSA vegetable pickups.

I met two of the six farmer/owners one morning during the 2012 CSA season. I initially biked right passed the lot. When I realized I had passed by, I turned around. It was 6:08 and I was late. There was already someone waiting for me.

One portion of this double lot was completely fenced off with a trellised gate entrance. It looked like someone had put some effort into making it look nice. The other lot was not fenced in, just rows of vegetables. There was also a greenhouse in the back of the lots near the alley. Weeds surrounded the greenhouse, but the garden plots, while not weed-free, were clearly well tended. Because of the previous night's rain, everything looked fresh.

The greenhouse was empty now but the farmers had moved seedlings from their basements into the greenhouse for transitioning early in the CSA season. These seedlings were later transplanted into the 17 farm plots around the Metropolitan Area. There were tears in the plastic on one side of the greenhouse. Because of the location of the slits in the plastic, one of the farmers suspected local youth walking by with a knife. Because of this type of occurrence, the farm really wanted to be able to hire local youth as farm employees. The farmers wanted to establish the farm as something positive in the neighborhood.

I was unsure when I arrived and saw Anne walking the rows of plants in the open plot if this was a farmer or not. All my communication had been with Rick and I was expecting to meet

him. I thought this woman might be one of the neighbors looking at the garden after the rain. But, this woman was one of the farmers.

Anne was blonde, blue-eyed and dressed in shorts, a light shirt and wellies. Everything was muddy because of the previous night's rain. It was clear within minutes that Anne loved farming. Anne told me she was introduced to vegetable farming back home in New Hampshire. After one summer working on a farm she knew she loved farming and did not know how she could live without it.

In the spring of 2011, just before her college graduation, she was in the Student Center and met a woman who had graduated the previous year. This woman was on her way to a meeting about starting an urban farm. She invited Anne to come along and Anne joined the farm at that meeting. Anne said, "We chose a name and I became part of the farm that day. We found this land, this lot that is the fenced off area and ran a 17-member CSA and sold at one [farmers] market last year."

Rick arrived a few minutes later. He was a few years older and had more than six summers of farming experience at home in Massachusetts and in California. His first summer on the farm back in Massachusetts started out as a challenge from a local farmer. Rick said the farmer told him he could work on the farm for the summer if he (Rick) thought he was "tough enough." Rick said he could not turn down that challenge and Rick has been farming ever since.

Since the Neighborhood Farm farmers were recapturing vacant city lots, the first year or two of farming the land was particularly weedy. Even though every farmer fights weeds no matter how long they have been farming, the weeds on newly reclaimed land are particularly active. So the Neighborhood Farm farmers spent hours weeding.

The time I spent with Anne and Rick on one second-year lot was punctuated with expressions of delight at the number of insects living in the soil and how much the color and texture of the soil had changed since the first year. The soil had a chance to respond to the tilling and composting from the previous year and although the weeds were still present, the soil was darker and significantly less compacted.

The farmers focused as much time and attention as possible on making things work without the use of pesticides and chemicals. Although not organically certified, the farm used organic growing practices and they made efforts to limit their use of fossil fuels. They used a walk-behind tractor for tilling, but were working toward the purchase of a tractor for the 2013 CSA season. Although the farm owned a full-size pickup truck for transporting produce, they also had a cargo bike trailer they used for commuting between farm lots as much as possible.

Anne's long term farming dreams included the development of a full-menu farm where all nutritional needs for a household could be met on the farm. Rick had a dream of attaching a farm to a school and combining the farming activities with the school lunchroom and all the other business skills and expertise required to farm successfully. For now, however, Anne and Rick and their farming partners were just growing vegetables for their shareholders in the Metropolitan Area.

Neighborhood Farm sold 57 full shares for the 2012 CSA season, but more than 75 shareholders because they are one of the few CSAs to sell half shares. They did not hit their goal of selling 100 shares, but Anne said that in a way she was relieved because there was more than enough work to do for 75 shareholders. So the first consolidation year with 57 full shares was a great learning season for the farm and the farmers.

To defray some of the farm startup costs, these farmers implemented a KickStarter campaign on the website KickStarter.com. Individuals contributing to their KickStarter campaign received a complimentary CSA share. I interviewed one shareholder whose mother contributed to the farm's Kickstarter campaign and gifted her complimentary share to her daughter. This shareholder said she loved her CSA share, but would not have been able to afford it if she had to purchase it on her own.

The farm also had a video on their website for the 2012 season offering CSA members the option of paying ahead for three seasons of CSA vegetables. By paying ahead for the 2012, 2013, and 2014 seasons, shareholders could guarantee their current pricing and provide the farm with additional working capital. I do not know how many, if any, shareholders took advantage of this offer.

Neighborhood Farm also offered sliding scale pricing that was completely self-declared. The farm determined a price range and allowed shareholders to "self-select" their level of financial commitment. The sliding scale pricing was mentioned only in passing when I interviewed Anne and Rick, but the details were available on their website. Even though most of the larger farms offer payment options through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or automatic monthly bank withdrawals, none of the other farms offered the reduced pricing option based solely on self-declaration.

Two of the other farms offered reduced-price work share options, but Neighborhood Farm did not request or expect repayment by time or work. They were not even particularly interested in volunteer time. Their primary goal was to eventually provide neighborhood youth with jobs on the farm. Both Ann and Rick said they wanted these jobs to be living wage jobs.

Even though, based on what they wrote on their website, the farmers themselves averaged only \$6.75 per hour during the 2012 CSA season.

Neighborhood Farm farmers were also living in the communities that they served. Not all of the CSA members became “close friends.” But, Anne said when she saw CSA members around town, “I feel like they're neighbors. They're more than acquaintances. So that's a good feeling. There are some of them that get really involved in the farm and they're more than just regular members.” Rick also talked about being a part of the community. His dream was to make the farm a sort of community space or a place to bring the family.

I want to work on this sort of community part and it [the CSA] not just being a box of vegetables that you get, but being more of a, place to bring your family to spend time. We have had a few CSA members volunteer which I think is great. So all those things I think we can really tap into by being in the city....But, we'll see. I don't know what we'll feel like or if the CSA members would feel the same way (small laugh). I hope they do.

The Mission Statement for the farm said the farmers “have a vision for a more self-reliant economy in which we rely on the power of community and our own two hands, rather than entrusting our livelihood to complicated, profit-driven corporations.”

Their existence as an urban farm was not without its challenges. In a January 2013 blog post they asked readers to watch for city lots that might be available for farming. The post explained the tenuousness of being urban farmers and the agreements they have with the current landowners only being enforced as long as there was nothing else to be done with the land. Those agreements, however, left the farm, vulnerable.

We're fortunate enough to have found many land owners who are willing to lease us land for free, but the condition is always this: only until we can find something better to do with it. If landowners decide to sell or build, we're out. All our work on building soil is lost, and we're forced to move on. We've been fortunate to not have this happen too often, but we're nervous about the future. Many of our sites [are] unlikely to be ours in a few years.

In another blog post Neighborhood Farm requested assistance with the startup of an orchard. The farm was looking for individuals willing to volunteer space for a few "baby" apple trees for a couple of years. This was described as an opportunity for the farmers to "learn the basics of orcharding" and would allow the "volunteers" to keep one to three trees after the trees were ready to be transplanted.

Midsummer 2013 Anne announced in the blog that she and her partner were moving out of the city and would begin farming in an "unknown as of yet" rural community. They planned to raise sheep, pigs, and chickens as well as fall storage crops for the winter share. In addition to their existing vegetable shares, they hoped to have a meat share available by the fall of 2014. I was surprised when I read Anne's blog post, not because she was moving out of the city toward her dream of a "full-menu" farm, but because she was making her dream come true so quickly.

Urban Community Farm – 2011 CSA Season. I met Jackie from Urban Community Farm at a 2011 CSA Fair. She had just been hired as a full-time farmer after spending the previous summer as a (more than) full-time volunteer. The Urban Community Farm began in 2010 as a fund raising project of the Urban Neighborhood Community Association. Jackie first suggested the idea of a CSA in 2010 not only as a fundraising idea, but also as a way to clean up

and beautify the community. Then, after suggesting the CSA idea, she spent the whole summer volunteering for the CSA.

After surveying the vacant lots in the neighborhood, the Association selected two privately-owned lots and approached the owners about buying the lots. The owners were actually interested in donating the lots to the Neighborhood Association. “If they want to donate...YES!” said Jackie, “But, yes, we do want to purchase. We want permanency.”

When I met Jackie it was early in the morning at the Community Center. I arrived a few minutes early for our interview and the building was locked. When I saw Jackie striding across the parking lot toward the building she exuded excitement and energy. She was as excited about farming as she was about improving and developing a greater sense of community within her own neighborhood.

The 2010 season was a test run and the CSA accepted only seven shareholders. “I thought we would end up with a bunch of liberal women from outside the neighborhood” Jackie said. Instead “it was ALL neighborhood people, mostly men...it was very interesting.” There was even a waiting list to be activated for the 2011 CSA season. They decided to grow slowly and for the 2011 season stopped taking sign-ups at 30 shareholders.

The Neighborhood Association purchased a building in the neighborhood that was previously a flower shop. The building had been owned by a community family since the 1960s, but was abandoned after a family member was killed in a 2004 holdup. Since that time, Jackie said the building was like “a wound in the community.” After the beginning of the 2011 season all CSA distributions and business were done from this building. In Jackie’s eyes this was a healing for the community.

Jackie said, “This CSA is about community,” and to Jackie that meant providing jobs in the community, paying for improvements in the community, and making the community more beautiful by using these previously empty lots. The jobs initiative was one of the most important pieces of the CSA for Jackie because her long term goal was living wage jobs in the community. When I interviewed Jackie there was one newly-hired farmer in addition to herself. Jackie said there were plans to hire another part-time farmer in the near future.

The idea of the living wage also spilled over into the pricing for their work share participants. “That’s [work share] a wage as well” Jackie said. So she wanted to make sure work share participants were reimbursed at a living wage rate to maintain integrity in the system. “If you want people [shareholders] to pay what production costs” said Jackie, “you have to pay production costs too.”

In Jackie’s mind the living wage jobs and the volunteer hours given to the CSA all come right back to benefit the community. Jackie believed their Urban Farm shareholders were different because the farm and the shareholders live in the same community. When you are in the same community, Jackie said,

You know your money is going right to yourself. This is all our profits. They [people] understand that, you know, my neighbor has a job, didn’t used to have a job, but has a job now. My auntie has a job from those tomatoes. But also, this money is coming right back to me. What funded those speed bumps in the alley?
CSA.

For Urban Community Farm, the community was really an integral part of the farm and the farm was hoping to become an integral part of the community.

Fresh Face Farm – 2011 CSA Season. I met Serena at a CSA fair at one of the local food coops in 2011. Serena seemed to be bursting with excitement. She said she had just purchased a used tractor for her farm the day before and she was sporting pictures of the tractor and the farm on the table with her brochures. (I found out later what I interpreted as excitement was actually nervousness because this was her first CSA Fair.) Since I was already a member of a CSA and I was not “shopping,” I did not want to take a lot of time explaining my study. I asked Serena if it would be alright for me to follow up via email.

During our brief conversation she kept saying “I” did this and “I” did that. I assumed she was the representative of the farm and her partner or employer was home doing the work. My assumption was wrong. Serena was really doing all those things herself. Serena was the farmer and this was her farm and this was her first year.

Serena purchased the farm, including the farmhouse and all of the outbuildings, in October of 2010 and launched her CSA in the spring of 2011. As she was getting set up Serena was not shy about asking for advice and ideas from other farmers and people she knew. Frequently, she said, the advice she received was to not offer CSA shares her first year. Most people advised her to just sell her produce at the farmers market or local grocery stores. Serena assumed the advice was aimed at reducing the possibility that her failure might create “bad press” for community supported agriculture in general.

Despite the advice, Serena went ahead with her CSA venture and successfully completed her first and second year. At the end of the 2012 season Serena leased an additional 20 acres for the 2013 season. Although the newly-leased land delayed her farm's organic certification by another three years, the additional land allowed Serena to keep half of her crop land in cover crop every year. That was her goal when I visited her farm in 2011.

When I arrived at Fresh Face Farm everything looked idyllic. As I drove down the long driveway, the sky was blue with just a few clouds. The entire farmyard was neatly mowed. The farm buildings were all in good repair and barn swallows were flying around and singing very loudly. It was gorgeous.

I arrived at the farm around 9 a.m. Serena was coming in from the field. She was wearing galoshes, shorts and a tank top. My first thought was about sun exposure and sun screen. I soon forgot that because we went right out into the field and began harvesting radishes for the farmers market the next day.

This day happened to be the day the fall cover crop seed was delivered. The big truck arrived around 11:00. Serena and Assistant Farm Manager Jack were unusually excited. I did not get it, Jack explained.

Jack: This is the cover crop seed that we're getting delivered...that's like the best part about farming, is getting the cover crop.

CE: Why is that the best part?

Jack: Because you're building soil and you are building nutrients and it's really fun to watch it grow. You don't have to harvest it. You just let it grow

CE: And you don't have to weed it either

Jack: No, you don't. Well, it suppresses weeds, which is another good thing.

I still did not understand the excitement, but I appreciated the sentiment that this crop, out of which nothing would be gained directly, incited this level of excitement and enthusiasm. The delivery included vetch, winter rye, sudan, soybean, and clover seed. Serena later gave me a quick tutorial on what cover crop does and how it feeds the soil. After the tutorial I had a better appreciation for the thrill of the cover crop seed delivery.

Serena did not grow up planning to farm, but after moving around a lot and spending a couple of years in New York City she interviewed for internships on several CSA farms in the Northeast. She chose a farm and “I am glad they chose me” Serena said. It started out as a sort of adventure according to Serena.

So I figured that if I didn’t like farming, no big deal, you know, eight months of something I’d never done. That would be cool either way. But I found out I loved farming. I went back to that farm for a second season and about halfway through the first season I knew I wanted to own a farm. That was it. End of my story.

After two years of working on the CSA farm in Connecticut, she moved to Minnesota and spent two CSA seasons working on a large CSA farm more than one hundred miles from the Metropolitan Area.

After two years learning how to farm in this area, she started looking for her own farm. She watched the papers and drove all over the state and finally found a family farm that offered everything she wanted. The farm was close enough to the Metropolitan Area so she could get her produce to market and it was far enough away so land prices were affordable. She purchased 18 acres and in late 2012 leased those additional 20 acres. With these additional acres, not only would she be able to do full fledged crop rotation, she was also beginning the process of expanding her offerings to include perennial crops like rhubarb, blueberries, and asparagus.

Serena had approximately two and a half acres in vegetable production in 2011 and she started with 20 CSA shareholders. She had hoped to see more shares, but in the midst of the season she was glad she had not met her goal. She said she knew she had more than enough food to feed 20 families and next year she would just sell more shares. Since this was her first year she was still learning a lot and she said she was here for the long haul.

I don't plan on not being here in five years. I don't plan on not succeeding. Who knows what's going to happen, but those things aren't in my plans. I'm not in this half ass. A lot of money has gone into this, a lot of time, a lot of passion, a lot of energy. So I'm going to be here selling shares. That's just what's happening.

In addition to the CSA shares, Serena also sold produce to two local food coops and at a farmers market in the Metropolitan Area every weekend.

I spent a day with Serena and harvested vegetables for the next day's trip to the farmers market. In addition to harvesting vegetables I picked potato beetles and transplanted brassicas. Serena paid attention to everything that was harvested and washed. "I don't want anything ugly to ever leave this farm. I don't want to send anybody unattractive food." When I was there she had just completed her weekly CSA delivery the day before, she sent vegetables to the local food cooperative at noon, and was preparing for the farmers market the next morning.

Serena was a bundle of energy, moving from one task to another, talking about the next task while still finishing the current job. Since purchasing the farm the previous fall, she had remodeled half of the barn to create a packing area where she and Jack packed the CSA boxes. Nearby there was a walk-in cooler and right outside the door a washing area for the vegetables. Her plans were to finish off the other half of the barn as housing for a farm intern. She completed that goal during the winter of 2012-13 and hired a summer intern for the 2013 CSA season.

When I was at the farm she showed me where she planned to locate a hoop house if her application for a USDA loan was approved. At that point she did not know yet if she would offer a fall share. The rutabagas, brussel sprouts, and parsnips had all come up well. The potatoes were looking really good and she had just seeded her fall carrots the day before. So if her hoop house application came through she could plant greens and offer a fall share.

Piloting Questions

Farmers. During the summer of 2011 I tested a series of questions with the farmers as part of the Qualitative Research pilot study for which the original IRB was issued. I did some tweaking to the questions before the 2012 CSA season. Jeffrey from Township Farm participated in both the 2011 pilot study and the 2012 season. I did not “re-interview” Jeffrey, but I did ask him the questions I added after my pilot study.

Although there was limited discussion about community during the CSA season, all the farmers I interviewed expressed a desire to foster and maintain a sense of community among their shareholders. This sense of community, as with any small business, is an important component in the maintenance of the farm’s customer base and the farm’s continued success. How the farmer viewed the customer base, as community or as customers, was expressed in a number of ways.

Shareholders. It was difficult to anticipate how the telephone interviews were going to proceed. I piloted my questions with some of the friends and relatives and realized my questions were not open-ended enough. I revamped my question list significantly before I started my shareholder interviews in December of 2012. When I arranged a time for the interview I included a list of questions in the email so the shareholders would have a chance to think about the topics I hoped to cover.

In my second set of shareholder interviews in March 2013, I assumed the conversation would be about social media and how the shareholders used social media in communicating with the farm. I included a list of social media questions and topics in the email when the interview time was arranged. However, I was surprised to find that none of the shareholders I interviewed in the second round of shareholder interviews even used social media. I had to “unexpectedly”

resort back to my original set of shareholder questions. I was taken by surprise with the first of the March interviews, but I was fully prepared with the backup questions for the next interviews.

Websites and Social Media

At the beginning of the 2011 and 2012 CSA season each of the CSA farms had an active farm website in addition to a Facebook account and/or Twitter feed. However, by the middle of the 2013 CSA season I noticed that Urban Farm had dropped their website. In addition, Neighborhood Farm's website was difficult to navigate and appeared to have been forgotten. Both of these CSAs apparently were relying on Facebook for their communication with customers. Neighborhood Farm had a blog that could be accessed via the website, but it was easier to access the blog from the Facebook postings than from the website itself.

The remaining three farms actively maintained their websites in addition to their Facebook and Twitter accounts. The farms with the active websites had more website pages for selling additional products such as cheese shares, fruit shares, egg shares, and excess produce. First Year Farm was also selling farm t-shirts and baseball caps on the website.

An additional difference between the farms with active websites and those without was the methods of payment available. The three farms with active websites also accepted credit card payments. The two farms that did not appear to be actively maintaining their websites were cash or check only and did not offer any ancillary products. The ability or willingness of farmers to accept credit card payments may also play a role in the importance of the farm website.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Ethical concerns and confidentiality were addressed in the letter of explanation and informed consent given to all participants, both farmers and shareholders. All participation was

voluntary. Participants were neither minors nor members of a vulnerable group. All individual participants' data and names of the farms were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Farmers were given the option to be interviewed privately or in the field while they were working. Three of the farmers opted for working interviews. These farms, Township Farm, Neighborhood Farm, and First Year Farm, perhaps not coincidentally, were all privately owned farms. The two farmers opting for interviews only, Urban Farm and Classic Lake Farm, were both part of larger nonprofit organizations. For the interview-only farmers we met in the farm office. In the case of Classic Lake Farm, however, after talking for about an hour in the office, Erik gave me a tour of the farm as we continued our conversation.

Shareholder interviews were all done as telephone interviews. The interviews were scheduled at the shareholder's convenience. Most of the interviews were done in the evening or during the weekend. Four of the 13 interviews were conducted during the business day.

Limitations

Definition of Community. One of the limitations of this study was the ambiguity of the definition of community and how the idea of community is interpreted by different individuals. In my study I looked at five out of 64 CSA farms in the state of Minnesota. Obviously, the definition and description of community may be different for other CSA farms, especially if the farm is in a more rural area. Since the farms in my study all served shareholders in a large urban center, their approach to develop and refine their community or customer base may be different from other farms in Minnesota. As a result, the size of my study may be perceived as a limitation in how it related to the transferability of my findings in terms of the future of CSAs.

Subset of Shareholders. The CSA shareholders returning surveys were a subset of individuals willing to take the time to complete and return the survey. The surveys included very

little negative feedback. It is possible that this subset of individuals was a self-selecting group less prone to discussing dissatisfaction or unhappiness. Consequently my results may be skewed due to the lack of any “dissatisfied” participants. Dissatisfaction is an especially important element in the discussion of community because of the high turnover rate in CSA membership. Lacking the opportunity to discuss dissatisfaction with CSA members left a very important segment of the study population with no representation.

Snapshot in Time. Another limitation was the “snapshot” in time. There were many other changes with the potential to impact the future of CSA farming in addition to the scenarios described in my phenomenological study. Some of these factors include the economy and the ability of consumers to “front” the money to farmers. In addition, the increasing availability of organic and local produce in grocery stores may reduce the importance of a CSA share as a way to get fresh, organic produce.

Climate Change. There was also the issue of climate change and the viability of crops raised on CSA farms at the time of my study. Some new crops have already been introduced to Midwestern CSA farmers as the winters become less severe. For example, my CSA distributed baby ginger during the 2012 CSA season. Normally, ginger is considered a tropical plant, but by planting the ginger in a greenhouse the farmer was able to maintain the optimal 65 degree soil temperature through most of the growing season. It is possible that substantial changes in the vegetables grown by farms may influence shareholder participation negatively or positively.

Commercialization. As larger companies see consumers willing to spend more money on fresh vegetables, middlemen are being introduced into the community supported agriculture business model and the concept of community supported agriculture is increasingly commercialized. Middlemen, however, were just a small part of the changes being introduced in

the CSA marketplace. Other options such as punch cards for farm produce stand purchases, organizations acting as distributors for farmers' vegetables, and the availability of online vegetable purchases on an on-demand basis were reshaping the expectations of consumers and the marketplace offerings of the farmers.

All of these variables may impact the future of community supported agriculture. This is especially true as the possibility of economic profit becomes a bigger part of the community supported agriculture business model. My snapshot did not take into consideration these types of unpredictable elements.

Data Analysis Spiral

I used Cresswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral to analyze and organize my data and identify three themes. As Cresswell described the process, which is circular rather than linear, the first step is to organize data into units or codes. The next process in the spiral is to immerse oneself in the data by rereading, recoding and re-evaluating each interview. This process includes noting and memoing in the transcripts until one finds an idea or group of ideas that create a theme or category. Once a theme or category is identified the final step is to describe the category in its own context.

Going through my transcripts the first time, I began the coding process by "converting the files to appropriate text units (e.g., a word, a sentence, an entire story) for analysis" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 150). The first time through the transcripts I coded everything I considered "of interest." Once this step was completed for my farmer interviews, I started the process again.

The next time through the transcripts I took my codes and entered them into an Excel spreadsheet, entering codes as columns and the farmers as rows. This allowed me to see where codes intersected and made it easy to identify frequently appearing codes. I now entered what

Cresswell (2007) called the reading and memoing stage of analysis. I went through my transcripts several more times looking for any new ideas or associations.

I was initially disappointed to find at the end of the coding process for my farmer interview/participant observations nearly 50% of my codes dealt with the physical farm and the farmers' farming methods. These were codes represented how the farmers farmed, what the farmers did, and solutions the farmers found for problems with pests and weeds. Basically the codes involved the physical acts of farming that I found "interesting." I decided these items had nothing to do with community and I set nearly all of them aside. I even said to my dissertation chair that most of my farm transcripts were useless because so many of the hours I spent working on the farms had to do with the processes of farming and nothing to do with community.

I now moved from the "reading and memoing loop back into the spiral to the describing, classifying, and interpreting loop" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 150). Because I had eliminated nearly half of my codes I started with a significantly smaller number of coded possibilities. I took my transcripts with notes and began highlighting the items from my spreadsheet that I associated with the concept of community. I attempted to sort and classify the ideas and impressions into broader categories as I searched for themes in the data.

After struggling to categorize and classify the codes left from my initial coding efforts, I decided to go back to the items I previously eliminated because I thought the items were not associated with community. I took these farm and farmer-related items and moved back to the first loop in the data analysis spiral (Cresswell, 2007). I wondered if I would find something in these codes if I just tried to think differently. It was at this point I realized why these farm and farmer-related items were so important to me. These topics addressed how the farmers chose to farm and these choices represented the farmers' values, integrity, and dedication. If I was going

to find community anywhere that was where the idea of community would probably be found.

Going through the data again, I identified a number of elements that subtly spoke of community. What the data revealed, although somewhat indirectly, was that it was in how the farmers treated the land, how the farmers chose to nurture and grow the vegetables, how the farmers thought of and cared for their shareholders and farm that exemplified the farmers' values. From there one could see the possibility of community. With this new insight about community I went through my transcripts again, this time identifying and reclassifying most of the items I previously eliminated. Some of the elements I found this time as I progressed through the spiral included: 1) Farming as Craftsmanship; 2) Motivation, Meaning and Purpose; 3) Caring for the Soil and Environment, 4) Transfer of Knowledge. I took all of these items and grouped them into a single theme I named Farmers: A Force for Good.

Now I went back to the codes with which I had unsuccessfully struggled previously. With a different mindset I took my spreadsheet of shareholder interview codes and looked for connections between the farmer and shareholder interviews. I found where the codes for the farmers and shareholders intersected, but there was something wrong with the intersection. Both the farmers and the shareholders appeared to be pleased with the relationship(s) but the shareholder side of the relationship seemed to be more self-centered and individualistic.

I tried to look at the data as objectively as possible because, from my own experience as a CSA shareholder, this was what I was expecting to find. I was concerned that my expectations might be influencing my finding that the relationship was actually quite shallow on the part of the shareholder. In addition, this idea also reflected the strength of the capitalist nature of the relationship that I thought community supported agriculture was designed to weaken. Even with these caveats in mind I found a category I called Lopsided Loyalty: Farmer vs. Shareholder.

I did not see the two sides competing, but there was frequently more dedication on the farmer's side of the relationship than on the shareholder side. McFadden (Groh & McFadden, 2000) called shareholders the weakest link in the chain. But, since the farmer also needs to sustain the financial part of the relationship, the farmer's greater dedication to the relationship can be understood.

I now went back to my data a third time. By this time I had developed more confidence in my ability to see what the data were saying. I was particularly interested in what, if anything, the data had to say about the idea of community directly. To only look at community as if it were a sustaining idea behind CSAs would be shortsighted. Community supported agriculture is a business and all of the farmers talked about the business end of things although that was usually secondary in the conversation. The farmers talked about organizing a group of reliable shareholders that would allow them to bypass the process of selling shares and marketing their CSA. None of the farmers liked that "selling" part of community supported agriculture.

The original idea behind community supported agriculture, was that the community would support the farmer. Traugher Groh, from Temple-Wilton Community Farm, said supporting the farmer was the responsibility of the community. No matter where we live, Groh said, we all depend on farmers. "We have to either farm or to support farmers, every one of us at any cost. We can not give it up because it is inconvenient or unprofitable" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. xi). We can choose to make fewer television sets, Groh said, but we can not choose not to farm (Groh & McFadden, 2000).

What was it the shareholder really wanted -- community or vegetables? What was it the farmer was really selling -- community or vegetables? These questions brought me to the final theme in the data that I called CSA: Community...Really?

After identifying these three themes using Cresswell's Data Analysis Spiral, I completed the spiral with the final step, the "describing, classifying, and interpreting loop" (2007, p. 151). This, according to Cresswell (2007), is the researcher's opportunity to provide a description, interpretation and explanation of the categories or themes that are found in the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter I complete Cresswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral with the final step of describing and interpreting the data. As described in the previous chapter I identified three themes with attached elements in my data. I labeled these themes as 1) Farmers: A Force for Good; 2) Lopsided Loyalty: Farmer vs. Shareholder; 3) CSA: Community...Really? I begin this chapter with a discussion about my definition of community.

It seems as if everyone should be able to explain "community." However, when it comes to actually putting the idea of community into words, the idea becomes somewhat ambiguous. Before describing the themes I identified in my data, I need to explain my own ideas about community and how my ideas apply to community supported agriculture. I finish the chapter with a description of each of these themes.

Community

Community takes on many different manifestations as organizations attempt to create and market their own ideas of "community." The word community is tossed around by all kinds of organizations including churches, nonprofit groups, and businesses. Everyone is building "community." This community, however, is no longer a geographical assemblage. Community is now a group of like-minded individuals. The internet and social media have contributed to this upsurge in "community building." The original intent of community supported agriculture in the 1980s was to strengthen and create community, but at that point community was still relatively localized.

Communities today are fluid and unpredictable. Most of the time community membership is voluntary. Frequently, community is simply a matter of membership in an organization. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) talked about online "brand communities" that are

formed and maintained strictly around the existence of a preferred retail product. For example, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) studied communities formed around a specific type of car (Saab) and computer product (Macintosh computer).

In terms of brand community, these group members feel an "important connection to the brand, but more importantly, they feel a stronger connection toward one another" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 418) even though most of them have never met. These group members feel an affinity for each other according to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and share a "social bond" around a product. Group members realized this was not the most important thing in their lives, but yet it felt reasonable to be a member of this brand community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Cobb (1996) said community is something we recognize primarily in its absence. "When they [the people] see society falling apart, they [the people] recognize the need for community" (p. 185). A Missouri woman recognized the importance of community in 1993 after the community was flooded (Esbjornson, 1996). When asked if she would leave her town after the flood waters receded, she opted to stay because the flood brought people together. "She wanted to stay," said Esbjornson, "because, in saving itself, her community exemplified the ethic of mutual help and cooperation... I suspect that the flood proved to her the need for solid communities" (1996, p. 85).

Communities are collections of individuals that share a common place, interest or lifestyle. Cobb (1996) identified three characteristics that define a community. First is mutual responsibility. If there is someone for whom one has no responsibility, that individual is outside the community. Second is the role that community plays in identifying its own members. With the decreasing importance of geographical communities, the ability for community members to self-identify becomes more important (Cobb, 1996). Third, according to Cobb (1996), "to be a

member of a community is to participate in its life, and to some degree, in its decisions” (p. 188). Today we have neighborhood communities, ethnic communities, religious communities, on-line communities, and brand communities. What about community supported agriculture (CSA)? Where (or does) the idea of community fit in for today’s CSAs?

Community in Community Supported Agriculture. If we go back to Cobb’s (1996) ideas of what creates community, we find the potential for community within the community supported agriculture model. Cobb’s (1996) first requirement was “responsibility” for members of the community. Every farmer with whom I spoke believed in the healthy lifestyle and eating habits they made possible for their shareholders. Providing vegetables and food that was both health-giving and tasty was essential for the farm’s survival as a CSA, but several of the farms went beyond just growing healthy food. The farmers also expressed a noticeable desire to educate and engage their shareholders about food.

One of the urban farm shareholders said “I was surprised at how engaged the farmers were each week, just talking to all the people.” The talk, she said, ranged from how to prepare or store the vegetables to what the farmers did while harvesting. The farms with drop sites did not meet their shareholders every week, but they engaged their shareholders with newsletters and recipes. This “responsibility” for others in the community went both ways, the farmer was responsible for the shareholders and shareholders embodied this same responsibility as they paid forward for the CSA share in the spring.

Secondly, Cobb (1996) described the ability for members to be able to self-identify as an important component in a community. It was not hard for the shareholders in my study to self-identify as shareholders. They needed to pay for their share in the spring and they had the responsibility of picking up their share every week from the drop site or from the farm itself.

The process of becoming a member of this community was largely self-selecting. However, even if it is easy to self-identify, this identification may not always carry a great deal of importance for every shareholder. For some shareholders it may simply be the box of vegetables that is the motivation for their membership in the community (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone & Kakalioursas, 1995; DeLind, 2003; Russell & Zapeda, 2008).

Thirdly, according to Cobb (1996), members of the community share in decision-making and operational responsibilities. Although in the farmer-driven CSA model this part of the idea of community was not immediately apparent, shareholder feedback and requests were particularly important to the farmer, especially the small CSA farms. One of the shareholders of Classic Lake Farm was delighted when the farm started an every-other-week share at her request. This allowed her to maintain (and pay for) her CSA membership and still spend a good share of her summer “at the cabin.”

The farmers from Urban Farm changed their planting schedule and cut back on the amount of beets on their planting schedule based on shareholder feedback. The farmer found, however, that responding to shareholder feedback was not always a good thing. After changing the planting schedule, Jackie realized she may have paid too much attention to a small group of shareholders. Jackie said,

We’ve changed what our planting schedule is and policies based on customer feedback. We got a lot of positive from customers just reinforcing the sort of variety we had. But not everyone enjoyed the amount of beets we provided. I really like beets (laugh) so, you know you go by what you like. I like beets YES, more beets...That’s too many beets, Jackie...too many beets...But now when I’ve been like talking to new customers and asking them, ‘Oh what are your favorite

vegetables?’ Everybody’s saying beets and I don’t have as many beets on the planting schedule, so it’s like GRRRR!

The elements of community as defined by Cobb (1996) exist in the CSA model. But the CSA model is not just about community. CSA is also a business and the farmers are faced with the daily challenges of sustaining a viable small business. The farmers straddled a fine line that involved both creating community based on their values and hard work and responding to community in a way that assured financial success.

The question still remains, what is the role of community in community supported agriculture? The scaffolding for community is there, but is there anything to put on that scaffolding? Is community something the farmer and shareholder can count on or is the idea of community in community supported agriculture the same type of marketing scheme used by public radio stations, hospitals, churches, and other for profit and nonprofit enterprises? This is what I found.

Farmers: A Force for Good

This theme is a collection of elements that bring together some of the unique and, in some respects, countercultural aspects of the CSA farmers in my study. I tried to use one or more of the elements as a theme by itself, but it did not work. None of the elements were broad enough and none of the elements said what was most important on its own.

The five farmers with whom I worked were all concerned about many of the same ideas with regard to the environment, food, and health. It was not that these farmers were not concerned about their success, but there seemed to be something bigger and more important than their own success. The five farms were evenly distributed, through no design of my own, in terms of gender, age, and farm owner vs. farm manager. Each of the farmers, in different ways embodied the elements that I identified under the Farmers: A Force For Good theme. These elements include 1) Farming as Craftmanship; 2) Motivation, Meaning and Purpose; 3) Caring

for the Soil and Environment, 4) Transfer of Knowledge.

Farming as Craftsmanship. Farming is like art. It requires a fully outlined planting schedule approximating what will be harvested each week, when the next planting of greens needs to be ready to leave the greenhouse to insure a steady supply of greens for the entire summer, when the spring crops will die back so the fall crops can be planted, when the cover crop can be seeded and ploughed and the land prepared for the fall. In addition there are the season long responsibilities of planting, weeding, harvesting, washing, packing, and delivering to shareholder and/or farmers markets, restaurants, or grocery stores.

Even though I did not hear any of the farmers say this, there is an art to handling all of these responsibilities. Farming is a dance of balancing the physical labor with the long term planning and constant juggling of day-to-day crises of rain, hail, drought, weeds, and pests. Juggling all of these elements successfully requires that “CSA farms embody the aesthetic and moral virtues of artisanship” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a, p. 144).

But it was not just the physical tasks and mental planning involved with the farming that seemed different to me; there was also something else. When I was at the farms or talking to the farmers, I experienced a feeling of positive energy and contentment. There was a very noticeable absence of negativity. Being with the farmers was always a positive experience.

I tried to explain this “something different” to a friend, but I could not come up with the right word. Later I received an email from my friend with a *New York Times* book review for book *The Craftsman* by Richard Sennett. In this book Sennett (2008) explored the concept of craftsmanship from the time of the Enlightenment to the development of the atomic bomb. Sennett focused on craftsmanship from the perspective of the connection between the head and the hands. “Every good craftsman,” he said, “conducts a dialogue between concrete practices

and thinking” (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). The emotional rewards of craftsmanship are grounding for the craftsman in a material reality and, at the same time, a sense of pride in that material reality that is created by one’s work (Sennett, 2008).

I now had a word to describe what was different. That word was “craftsmanship.” Sennett (2008) explored the development and creation of a craftsman’s talent in a number of different arenas, including cooking, music, and science. “Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). Even though Sennett never talked about farming as a craft, the examples and descriptions of a craftsman applied to farming as much as to the other examples in his book.

Now, that “something different” had a name and, as a researcher, I also identified the basis for the positive energy I experienced on the farm. The farmers were doing what they loved. They were farming and they were doing it well. “Craftsmen take pride most in skills that mature” according to Sennett (2008, p. 295) because as skills slowly mature, “one takes lasting ownership of the skill” (2008, p. 295). As the craftsman’s habits and skills mature, the process creates a relationship between problem finding and problem solving. This relationship is the basis for the continuing development of one’s craft. It is the continual questioning of everything the craftsman does that provides the groundwork for becoming an even better craftsman (Sennett, 2008).

Pride in craftsmanship. These farmers were proud of what they were doing and because everything was always changing, there was always the opportunity to develop and hone their skills. One of the things Serena from Fresh Face Farm loved about farming was that, “no year, no crop, no day, no project, no harvest, nothing is ever the same.” Serena celebrated the constant change. Serena also did a lot of improvising and problem solving. When the fields were too wet

for her truck or tractor, she bought sod and built a makeshift road down the middle of the field. When the mower she bought on Craig's List broke down (irreparably) she bought a "bush hog."

Serena also discovered the \$145 cultivator she bought could serve double (and sometimes triple) duty. "Ok. Ok. I didn't know" Serena said. "I bought this cultivator and it's proven to be extremely useful and we've used it for all these things including hilling the potatoes, which is amazing." She went on to explain how she was going to use the cultivator for the winter squash. She said she would be broadcasting some clover seed as cover crop to fix the nitrogen first because it would be too late to plant the cover crop after the winter squash was harvested. Then, using the cultivator to weed the squash for the first time, she would also incorporate the clover seed with one pass and then do one more pass in the tire tracks for the same purpose. Serena wrapped up her explanation this way.

So, the two passes we make will be serving three purposes. This is all experimental, I mean the guy that I worked with from Connecticut, he had the proper equipment to do it. So the experiment is, um, this cultivator for \$145. Man, this thing has been AMAZING!"

Jeffrey was looking for a way to protect his pumpkins from flea beetles because the beetles had almost taken out his entire crop the year before. Jeffrey sent one of his employees to the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) Conference the year before and she came back with the idea of planting hubbard squash on both ends of the pumpkin rows. The squash plants acted like decoys. The beetles liked the squash so much more than the pumpkin plants they left the pumpkin plants alone. The next year Jeffrey decided to take that same idea and try it with part of the cabbage crop. After some research he planted mustard next to one of the rows of cabbage. When I was at the farm the mustard plants were covered with flea

beetles and the cabbage plants were almost beetle-free. This was all experimenting, looking for pesticide-free ways of controlling pests.

Jackie from Urban Farm had to do her own share of problem solving. They were buying an “official CSA building” and were not sure if they would close on the building by the time of the first CSA distribution in 2011. But, Jackie said you just need to “roll with the punches.”

So they’ll [shareholders] probably be picking up their first shares here at the office. Um, I don’t know I’m also talking to some other people, you know, can we pick up our shares over here until we’re into that other building, you know trying to figure that out. Worst case scenario we’ll be buying a whole mess of coolers and a whole bunch of ice and we’ll be doing it here. Which is messy, but, you know this is how it is with something new and you’ve just got to roll with the punches and once we’re into our new building it’s going to be amazing.

The 2011 CSA season was the first time in nine years Jeffrey did not sell out his shares and he needed to figure out how much to plant. So Jeffrey cut back on the acreage he planted in the spring. However, garlic is planted in the fall and that year just happened to be a bonus year for garlic. Jeffrey had so much garlic he did not know what to do with it. He put it out at every distribution as a “freebie” but shareholders even stopped picking it up.

I did not understand why it could be so difficult to figure out how much garlic to plant. I thought you plant a clove of garlic in the fall and you get a bulb of garlic in the spring. How could you over-plant that much, even if you sold fewer shares in the spring than you had planned? Jeffrey explained that it is not really that simple.

First, he said, you do not know how many cloves are in each bulb, so it is difficult to know how many bulbs to save for planting. But if the bulbs you saved have a lot of cloves and

you have already “popped” them you really have to plant all the cloves or throw the extra cloves away. So, if you have a hard time throwing something away, you may end up planting more garlic than you planned. You also have to keep in mind that you might have a bad growing season for garlic and maybe the garlic bulbs will be really small. If the garlic bulbs are small, you can give each shareholder two small bulbs and that will be fine. But, if you did not plant enough garlic in the fall to give each shareholder two bulbs and giving them one small bulb looks so small...what do you do?

Even something that appeared simple, like deciding how many garlic cloves to plant, ended up being complicated. CSA farmers seed, transplant, and rotate 50-70 crops every year. Jeffrey described it this way, “

You should have like an overriding plan from the beginning of the season and what you plant and then like day to day you have to make a decision based on what’s there. Of course the plan doesn’t always match the outcome.

Every day required the farmers to make decisions with what they knew at the time. In other words, they used their intuition.

Farming and intuition. Even with a newly minted degree in Environmental Horticulture, Jack, the assistant farm manager at Fresh Face Farm, found a lot of the decisions he and Serena were making were based on intuition. Things were very different in real life. He said, “Well, man, things just don’t grow like they do in text books. It’s just so much harder to actually know, ‘Ok, you need to hand weed this.’ It’s a judgment call.” Sennett (2008) said intuition and intuitive leaps are part of the development of craftsmanship. For the craftsman “intuition begins with the sense that what isn’t yet could be” (Sennett, 2008, p.209).

Using the imagination and intuition to create tools was one of the elements Sennett

identified in craftsmanship. In encountering frustration with the tools currently available, the craftsman's creativity is unleashed (Sennett, 2008). The Neighborhood Farm farmers demonstrated this creativity as they experimented with ways to reduce their use of fossil fuels using bicycle-powered implements for some farming tasks.

When I was working at Neighborhood Farm, Anne was excited because the day before she heard about a machine shop in the neighborhood that might be interested in doing custom work. As soon as 9 a.m. rolled around she jumped on her bike and made for the shop. Even though she did not know exactly *what* she wanted, she wanted to know if or how these machinists might be willing to help.

Serena at Fresh Face Farm used her imagination and saw possibilities other farmers might not have seen when she discovered ways to use the \$145 cultivator for jobs not usually done with a cultivator. It might appear from these examples the farmers used simple, generic problem-solving skills, but the CSA farmer is called upon to do more than just farming. If all the farmer had to do was farm, it would be much simpler. But, there seemed to be no end to the skills and talents that the CSA farmers needed to develop. There was also the business side of things, the newsletters, the customer service, the selling, the branding, the planting, harvesting, weeding, washing, packing, and scheduling.

There is even an “art” to putting the weekly CSA box together as I learned from Serena’s assistant manager at Fresh Face Farm. This mini-lecture by Jack was complete with demonstration and dramatization of the shareholder’s delight upon opening the box.

So this is what I wanted to talk to you about...the art of packing a box. You’ve got to make it POP when you open the box and so some things just have to go on top because they are delicate like the greens. They just have to go in on top and

so then you try to put the radishes in somehow. Like the radishes are pointing up, the radishes look nice and then they [the shareholders] say, “Ok, I got this, I got that” and then “Oh my gosh, look at this, my own head of broccoli and this head of lettuce.” So, like you try to make it [the box] look as pretty as you can.

Anything with color on top, they say we eat with our eyes first, right? So we want them to say, “Oh wow, radishes!”

Jack confided to me that shareholders would be perfectly happy to get a box full of peas or carrots. “But” said Jack, “we always throw a couple things in they don’t want to eat like the chard. And they [the shareholders] just have to eat the other stuff we give them.” Jack thought it was always a good idea to introduce people to new vegetables because, he said, you never know what people might discover that they really like.

Motivation and craftsmanship. In the development of craftsmanship, Sennett (2008) said motivation was more important than talent. Talent can be developed, Sennett (2008) said, but motivation comes from within. For the farmers in my study, motivation seemed equivalent with the love of farming. Serena, Anne, and Rick all knew they wanted to farm after spending one summer on a farm. Anne from Neighborhood Farm put it this way:

I loved it and worked really hard all summer, but at the end of it I felt just like when I stopped farming I thought OMG what am I going to do without farming. It just became very easily what I wanted to do for my life.

Jackie at Urban Farm was motivated by the idea of actually doing something that could beautify, create jobs, and bring her community together. Erik at Classic Lake Farm said farming was a chance to do something positive. After spending time in Central America fighting against the inequality and governmental policies he said he just got tired of being negative.

Erik said he watched the Central American people with whom he was working and saw their connection to the land. He decided he did not want to fight anymore and farming was something positive. For him it just seemed like the right thing to do. Erik was “happy” about where he was and what he was doing. But, he said sometimes he was just too busy to think.

That “too busy” concern was expressed by more than one farmer at the CSA Conference I attended. The farmers talked about being so busy in the summer they did not have the time to enjoy what they were doing. The Plenary session at the Conference included a series of round table discussions about the challenges and difficulties associated with CSA operations. Several groups cited the lack of time during the summer as one of the many obstacles they faced. They had so many things to do they did not have time to engage with shareholders.

One farmer stood up as the spokesperson for his table and said the biggest difficulty was that they [the farmers] were doing what they were doing so their shareholders could spend time with their families. But, he said, “We are so busy doing that we don’t have time to spend with our own families.” In the next breath this same farmer said the greatest opportunity they had as CSA farmers was “growing food and providing for other people [because that] gives a really good quality of life.”

Jeffrey had been farming for nine years when I met him. The way he told the story he became a farmer partially out of necessity (both he and his wife were unemployed) and partially because he just thought he could do it. He was less idealistic but more experienced than the other farmers in my study and he appeared to approach the enterprise in a more business-like, and sometimes cynical, fashion. My first reaction was that he was a good farmer, but (and this is why one should never make snap judgments) his heart was not in it. It took time for me to

realize, by observation and reading his blog, he would not have been working so hard and putting in the long hours unless his heart was really in it.

Craftsmanship and citizenship. Sennett (2008) equated craftsmanship with good citizenship. If your heart is in your work, Sennett said there is an enhanced capacity to govern one's self and that makes better citizens. "The industrious maid" wrote Sennett, "is more likely to prove a good citizen than her bored mistress" (2008, p. 269). Sennett said the loss of craftsmanship in today's workplace "undermines democratic participation" (p. 269). The CSA farmers in my study displayed a refreshing pride and dedication to their work and shareholders.

Other farmers exhibited this same pride and dedication. Michael Moss (2014) wrote about farmers for the *New York Times* and described meeting a farmer at a restaurant outside of Chicago. Moss described what happened before the interview even began. The farmer, formerly a corn farmer, "plunked his day's pickings on the table with a huge grin. 'Just taste this cucumber,' he [the farmer] said, gnawing one in his other hand." After the cucumber the farmer brought out tomatoes and "some just-picked ears of raw sweet corn for eating, which he did, right there in the booth" (Moss, 2014, para. 20). Moss said the farmer was not only excited about offering shoppers higher quality vegetables; he was also excited about the potential for selling the vegetables at lower prices through direct marketing.

Sennett (2008) said when your heart is in your work, you have an enhanced capacity to govern yourself and this makes for better citizens. Look at the farmer Moss (2014) interviewed. Here was a farmer excited not about making a lot of money, but excited about providing a benefit (high quality vegetables) to someone else for *less* money. Moss (2014) went on to quote the farmer reveling in his ability to provide a good deal because so many people are receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

It's a good feeling, especially knowing that one in six people are using food stamps. They're looking for the least expensive calorie possible, and why should a pound of tomatoes – which are basically seed, dirt and water – have to cost as much or more than a frozen meal?"

The farmers in my study and the farmer Moss interviewed have a lot in common. These examples and the fact that Sennett found motivation more important than talent in the development of craftsmanship leads me to my next element, Motivation, Meaning, and Purpose.

Motivation, Meaning and Purpose. There was a second thing about these farmers that was hard to identify. I went back through my transcripts and the coding I had done. There were codes like vicissitudes of nature, problem solving, education, communication, marketing challenges, and economic transactions. Looking at these codes reminded me of obstacles, challenges, things that create ambiguity. These were also things farmers dealt with every day. After going back through my notes I found there were rarely any complaints from the farmers. There were so many things the average person would complain about, hard work in hot weather, long hours in rainy weather, washing vegetables in cold weather, and the largely unnoticed and unappreciated work of preparing and packing delivery boxes or getting ready for the on-farm-pickups. In spite of all the challenges faced by the farmers there was very little (if any) negativity.

Another friend pointed me to Daniel Pink's book (2009), *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* in which Pink described Type I individuals who respond to intrinsic motivation and Type X individuals who respond to extrinsic motivation. For the intrinsically motivated group the three elements that are most motivational include autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2009). All three of these motivational elements are front and center in a farming

career.

Autonomy. To blossom under the mantle of autonomy is humanity's "default" setting (Pink, 2009). The idea of autonomy means people have the opportunity to decide what they are going to do, how they are going to complete the task, and with whom they will complete the task. All of this is done without supervision. This type of autonomy was at the very heart of farming and highly motivational for intrinsically-motivated (Type I) individuals. Farmers spend hours preparing the soil, planting, harvesting, cleaning, and packaging. Farmers know all of these tasks must be done without "upper management" mandating their completion and accomplishment. The farmers were left to answer for themselves as to when and how these tasks would be completed. With autonomy as our default setting, the accomplishment of these tasks or goals becomes a function of craftsmanship rather than assignment (Pink, 2009).

Traugher Groh (Groh & McFadden, 2000), one of the original farmers at Temple-Wilton Community Farm, said an individual could only care for an animal or a field or a farm out of an interest in that animal or field or farm and not because the individual was being paid to care for it. The best farmers were their own boss and they were farming because they loved to farm. Every morning the farmer woke up with a myriad of tasks that needed to be done and it was up to the farmer to decide how the work would be done.

Mastery. What Pink (2009) called mastery, and what I called craftsmanship, required individuals to view their abilities as expandable opportunities for growth. "Mastery" said Pink, "is a mindset" (p. 120). There is pain, practice, grit, and the knowledge that perfection is impossible. But there is also the ever present knowledge and goal that improvement is possible. These features of mastery, according to Pink (2009), make the mastery of a task both frustrating and alluring. "The joy [of mastery] is in the pursuit more than the realization" (Pink, 2009, p.

127).

All of the farmers with whom I worked talked about how they were going to do things next year. No matter what we were doing, they were thinking about what they were going to change. Frequent topics of conversation included how they would try to organize, plant, harvest, weed, and prepare the farm for the next season. They were also watching their fields. Was it time to turn on the irrigation? When was the last time the sprinklers were moved? How would they bring the basil to market next week and at what price would they sell it? Would the lettuce be ready for the first box of the season? For one farmer the lettuce was ready *before* the first box of the season and nearly 800 heads of lettuce had to be harvested before the first CSA distribution and sold at the market.

Always, every day, there was something to do to make the field, the flowers, the plants better, the cucumbers bigger, the tomatoes redder, and the zucchini more plentiful. But, no matter how much the farmer did, there was still more to be done. There was always one more task, job, errand, chore, or duty that would make something better. The farmer was engaged, always aware of this opportunity and responsibility.

There was a lot that humanity could learn from this aspect of farming which Groh (Groh & McFadden, 2000) called a “willingness to do what is necessary without complaint” (p. 8). This willingness was what Pink (2009) said leads to flow. This is how Pink described this state of flow.

In flow, goals are clear. You have to reach the top of the mountain, hit the ball across the net or mold the clay just right. Feedback is immediate. The mountain top gets closer or farther, the ball sails in or out of bounds, the pot you’re throwing comes out smooth or uneven. Most important, in flow, the relationship

between what a person had to do and what he could do was perfect. The challenge wasn't too easy. Nor was it too difficult. It was a notch or two beyond his current abilities, which stretched the body and mind in a way that made the effort itself the most delicious reward. (2009, p. 127)

“Oxygen for the soul” (2009, p. 127) is what Pink called it. This “oxygen” almost perfectly describes the contentment and excitement farmers exuded when they were in their fields.

In my transcripts I found a conversation between two of the farmers at Neighborhood Farm. I was surprised at the Observer's Comment I wrote while I transcribed the conversation. We had just spent approximately 30 minutes looking at one of their farm plots and we were in the truck driving to the next location.

Rick: Everything looks good after this rain.

Anne: Those kohlrabies (whew) did you look at that?

Rick: No...Did you go look at the peas just now?

O.C. They are talking about the plants that we were just looking at and talking about. It seemed like an odd conversation to have, unless you think about it. I am GUESSING they are just so pleased with what they were just looking at they just want to continue the "good feeling"

Anne: OMG Maybe we should trellis again

Rick: Everything just sort of, well, it's funny how quick it responds.

Even though we left the farm plot less than two minutes earlier, there was an excitement and pleasure that was palpable in their conversation.

Purpose. As important as autonomy and mastery are, the most important part of motivation, according to Pink (2009), is purpose or working toward something larger than

oneself. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999) said people are happy because of how they do things, not because of what they do. That is why autonomy and mastery are important. Regardless of how people do things, it is still purpose that provides the energy for doing the things that bring about happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). In business there is a lot of talk about profit maximization, Pink (2009) said talk should be about purpose maximization. Motivated people are purpose maximizers, not profit maximizers (Pink, 2009).

Purpose was most outwardly apparent with the urban farms. Jackie from Urban Farm talked about transforming how people thought about farms and farming. She wanted to make people think differently about the current food system. She said the farm's yields were going to be significantly higher per land mass because "We're farming by the square foot [and] because of the amount of attention we give to every plant. I'm paying attention to *every* pepper plant."

Jackie knew there was "definitely going to be some pushback from the old system to say, 'Hey, why doesn't this just be part of our system instead of a new system.'" But Jackie said she was ready to deal with the pushback. This "human-scale farming" was good according to Jackie because it created jobs and job creation was an important part of Urban Farm's purpose.

For Neighborhood Farm, farming was a political act and a matter of modeling a path toward more self-reliance. They wanted to rely on the power of community and their labor rather than "entrusting our livelihood to complicated, profit-driven corporations. Every day" their website said, "we wake up and work toward a society that is less sick and more well, less subdued and more empowered, capable, awake, and alive. Little steps, every day." The farmers exemplified this ideal in the composting, seeding, and other classes they offered at no cost to shareholders and members of the neighborhood.

In addition, the farmers at Neighborhood Farm did something unique that demonstrated their purpose. They offered a self-declared sliding scale share price. With no questions asked, shareholders paid what they felt they could afford (within a range) for a share. This was one way Neighborhood Farm farmers dealt with the contradiction in their beliefs and the idea that, as Anne described it, “most small farmers seem to be selling only to the folks who have money.” But, Anne said, “It's hard when you're the farmer and you're like, I have to make a living.”

Making it Work. Pink (2009) said in order for these motivational factors to apply, the individual must first be paid enough to take the need for money “off the table.” Once an individual’s basic needs no longer need to be worried about, motivation can blossom (Pink 2009). I never talked to farmers about their finances directly. I know Neighborhood Farm raised money through the Kickstarter website and both Neighborhood Farm and Urban Farm received some local grants from philanthropic organizations.

Still, every farmer talked about wanting to hire employees and pay a living wage or wished they were able to pay their current workers “what they are worth.” From my own experience most business people do not start a conversation about hiring employees by saying they want to pay a living wage. However, the words “living wage” came up frequently in discussions with these farmers.

It is one thing to pay a living wage, but for some farmers it is another thing to earn a living wage. After the end of the 2012 CSA season Neighborhood Farm posted on their website that the farmers earned an average of \$6.75 per hour, hardly a living wage. When I did my participant observation during the 2012 season, Rick just finished working five 14-hour days in a row and decided to take the weekend off. Because this was their first year he said there were probably a lot of inefficiencies in how they were doing things. In addition, they were still

building infrastructure. “I don't think the goal is to always work 70-80 hours a week” he said. “We're going to become smarter and smarter but if we don't become smarter farmers then we're not doing the right thing because we should be improving.”

Urban Farm also focused on the idea of a living wage. The farm's work shares required two four-hour shifts a month for four weeks of produce. Jackie said this was actually less generous than she wanted because she wanted to be paying the equivalent hourly rate of a living wage for the time spent working on the farm. She thought they should be paying more for the time being contributed. She said, “There has to be integrity throughout the entire system. If you want people to pay what it costs, what production costs, you have to pay production costs too. You can't just be on one side of the equation.”

Jackie admitted not everyone agreed with this view. There was pushback when the second farmer's job was advertised in the spring of 2011. The wage, Jackie said was “something one could actually live on.” But living wage jobs were the goal (or purpose) of this CSA. As Jackie saw it, when the farm hired people and paid a living wage, the money was coming right back into the community because there was another person in the community spending their money.

Sometimes “purpose” is a bit less complicated on the surface. Serena at Fresh Face Farm said, “You know I don't have something I feel the need to make happen other than to grow good vegetables for people. Like that's my goal, to grow good vegetables for people.” That is what she said, but what she did exemplified another purpose and a passion. Serena was dedicated to the land and feeding the soil. She wanted to make sure the land was getting back everything, and more, than it was giving. This was a commitment the other farmers also demonstrated and brings me to my next element, Caring for the Soil and Environment.

Caring for the Soil and Environment. Farming the same land year after year and not allowing the land to rest is more like mining the soil rather than farming (Groh & McFadden, 2000). You are "actually extracting the essences of the soil to a degree that they may not quite be replaced" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 114). Groh said in the poorer soil in New Hampshire they have "two years of grass clover lays following two years of vegetables to rebuild the organic matter in the soil" (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 47). Even the Romans recognized the importance of allowing the land to rest. Roman law required farmers to leave fields fallow every five years. Letting the land rest, amending the soil, and planting cover crops were all important components of farm operations for the farms in my study. But these ideas are not common among most commodity farmers.

Professor Terrence Cooper in the University of Minnesota's Department of Soil, Water, and Climate talked about the destructiveness of the soybean and corn crop rotation most common in Southern Minnesota during a presentation at the Bell Science Museum in December 2012. This rotation, Cooper said, was not sustainable because the soil was not allowed to rest and nearly all of the organic matter was removed from the fields when the crops were harvested. Since the organic matter was removed, there was nothing in the soil to retain moisture and the soil became porous requiring additional fertilizer to grow the next year's crop. Because the soil was so porous the fertilizer, most often nitrogen, was not retained either and leached into the ground water.

Cooper said Southern Minnesota was as dry as it had ever been in recorded history in 2012. Top soil that would normally hold up to 12 inches of water, in the fall of 2012 retained approximately one inch of water. Part of the reason for the dryness of the top soil, after the lack of rain, was the absence of organic material in the soil to hold the water. Professor Cooper said,

“People say that we can’t sustain the population farming organically, but I say we can’t sustain the population the way we are farming now because we are destroying the soil.”

High prices offered for conventionally-farmed commodity crops are exacerbating this situation. Previously land that could not be farmed profitably because of hills, trees, or rocks was left alone. This land acted as a sort of buffer against erosion. Now the land is being cleared and bulldozed for conversion into row crops since farmers can make a profit on just about any land with enough fertilizer. Dr. Richard Cruse, an agronomy professor at Iowa State University described the situation this way.

When crop prices are low and farmers are scraping by, many say they cannot afford to take steps to protect their fields from erosion. Now, he said, they say they still cannot afford it because there is too much profit to be made from farming every bit of land. (as cited by Neuman, 2011)

As a result, Cruse (as cited by Neuman, 2011) said that topsoil is being lost ten to 50 times faster than it is forming.

I found a different approach to farming at the farms in my study.

Caring for the Soil at Fresh Face Farm. I happened to be at Fresh Face Farm the day the fall cover crop seed was delivered. The big truck backed up to the shed where the seed was going to be stored and Serena and Jack hauled the 40 pound bags of seed from the truck into the shed. Serena was dancing and singing as she hauled the heavy bags into the old milk house that had been converted into a storage shed. Serena was delighted when the truck driver offered her the wooden shipping pallets because now the bags of seed would not sit on the concrete floor.

I was talking to Jack as the truck backed up to the shed and Jack said that he considered cover crop the best part of farming. I was surprised and I did not understand what could be so

special since this was not a revenue-producing crop. But Jack and Serena were not thinking about revenue. “Because” Jack explained, “you’re building soil and you are building nutrients and it’s really fun to watch it grow. You don’t have to harvest it. You just let it grow.”

When farmers plant cover crops it not only helps protect the soil from erosion when the soil is resting, but also puts nutrients that may have been depleted during the growing season back into the soil. Some cover crops are even called green manure. Serena was using the cover crop for nitrogen fixing and to add biomass to the soil. So, for example, she said when she planted oats and peas the peas sent nitrogen into the soil and the oats acted as a nurse crop “almost to help the peas have something to climb up.” In the end, the entire crop is ploughed into the soil and by adding this biomass the soil is better able to hold onto its nutrients. The added biomass also makes the soil more drought resistant because the soil can retain more water -- just like Professor Cooper was talking about.

Serena’s goal was to double the amount of land she had available for farming so she could keep half of the land in cover crop each year. That means completely taking the land out of production for an entire year. She said a lot of farmers do not want to do that, but she loved and was excited about the idea.

I think that some people find it too time-consuming where you’re taking, you know, you’re taking that land out of vegetable production. But I just feel like it’s so cool. It’s so cool to me that you can plant something and it’s feeding the soil for your crops to eat later. I just love it. So, I’m excited because we’re just getting into that.

Serena got her wish for keeping half of her land in cover crop each year. In November 2012 she leased an additional 20 acres. Even though this additional land delayed her organic certification

for another three years, it also allowed her to plant perennial crops like raspberries, asparagus, blueberries, and rhubarb and, at the same time, she expanded the number of CSA shares she offered.

Caring for the Soil at Classic Lake Farm. The drought conditions in 2012 did not allow Erik at Classic Lake Farm to do all the cover cropping and soil amendments he usually did. He planted the cover crops and even though the crops came up, he was hesitant to disc because he did not want to stress the soil any more than it was already stressed. Erik described it this way,

Usually [after a season of production] I mow it and then disc it and put a cover crop on it, but, there hasn't really been any water for two months and I just don't want to till it or disc it. I just don't want to damage it that much more.

In addition to planting a cover crop every year, Erik also put 6,000 to 8,000 pounds (depending on the moisture level) of compost on each acre every year. Erik got the compost from a dairy farm in Wisconsin that, he said, "discovered that they had a product that could make a nice sideline." In addition to the compost, Erik used an organic fertilizer as well as green manure. When I was at the farm, Erik spent almost as much time talking about the cover crops as he did talking about the actual vegetables crops.

Caring for the Soil at Neighborhood Farm. Building soil was a real challenge for the urban farms because they started with soil that had not been used for crops for years. There was a lot of work to do to get the soil ready. Neighborhood Farm used a BCS walk-behind tractor to turn the soil and then they started bringing in compost, a lot of compost. In the fall of 2011 they even picked up bags of raked leaves from yards to use as mulch.

One of the lots in which we worked was in its second year of production. Both Rick and Anne were talking about how different the soil was from just the year before. Anne was

especially enthusiastic. She talked about the importance of the compost and mulch in improving the soil's ability to retain moisture. She said this was especially important in the city because there was so much runoff as a result of all the concrete. There is not, she said, "a forest [or wetlands] nearby to act as a water safe." For the city lots, once the rain ran off it was gone. By adding the compost and other biomass to the soil, the soil retained more of the moisture and that, in turn, attracted and retained more of the beneficial insects and grubs.

All of the farms used fertilizer, but not the petroleum-based fertilizers used by conventional farmers. Most of the farmers used organic turkey doo. Next year, however, Serena was thinking about going to her farm neighbors. "There's a guy down the road," she said, "and he raises horses so I have access to his horse poop that's just been sitting there in piles for years." In a perfect world, each farm would have its own animals to "amend" the soil while the soil is resting. This is the natural way for the soil and farm to take care of itself. The animals eat the plants and the "doo" goes back into the soil to feed the plants when they come back. This is what small farming can do according to Groh (Groh & McFadden, 2000). This type of animal husbandry arrangement is not readily available in most cases, especially with urban farms, but is the ideal.

And what happens after the soil has been amended and fertilized (with natural fertilizers, of course)? The planting begins. Following is a post from Jeffrey's blog on one of the first nice spring days in 2013.

What has been happening on the farm this week? Transplanting, transplanting, transplanting. I calculated we transplanted 13,760 plants the last two and a half days. That's the most we have ever transplanted in recorded history (mostly since we have never actually recorded the number before). This would have been a

good year to have a transplanting machine other than Randy and Sally. But they held up well and didn't breakdown the whole time. The combined length of all the rows we planted was 12,400 feet. *That's equivalent to over 41 football fields or 2.3 miles in length.* All done on the ground on our knees. I think we all are thankful for today's rain.

Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge. I was expecting to find competition when I started talking to CSA farmers. But even though the number of farms serving the Metropolitan area had more than doubled in the previous three years, no one was complaining. Frequently I heard about the help and support new CSAs received from their "competition."

Fresh Face Farm and Urban Farm both talked about the assistance and support they received when they were beginning their inaugural seasons. Assistance ranged from sharing planting schedules to simply moral support and encouragement. "I'd never even been an intern on a farm or anything" Jackie from Urban Farm said. But she found that working with other farms and attending the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) Conference, the farmers were "exceedingly generous." Jackie said she received "tons" of information. She described what one of the other local CSA farmers did for her.

They put together this huge resource manual of materials of different post harvest handling, temperatures and what vegetables gave off, and all different ideas, you know how they organized work share schedules, but especially Linda [one of the teachers] was very very generous in giving her planting schedule which was a TON of work.

The "we're all in this together" attitude was also demonstrated by Neighborhood Farm. During their first year of farming they began cooperating and socializing with farmers from other

urban farms. Anne said they were not making any money during that first year and they needed to figure out what to do. They ended up meeting for coffee and dinner with other urban farmers and just talking. Anne continued,

So we found all the other urban farmers that we could and met with them and had coffee, got together for dinner all the farmers we could find and started talking about the issues. How to get started and numbers and how many people you feed off a lot and [we] got to be pretty good friends with some of them and ended up sharing a market stand and borrowing each other's equipment and that kind of stuff.

Eventually that communication and cooperation led to a merger of three urban farms into Neighborhood Farm.

Being in the city gave the Neighborhood Farm farmers a chance to teach people about how their food was grown and where their food came from. Their website said, “We like to educate our neighbors about how food is grown, to reconnect people with their food.”

Community education was especially important to these farmers. One of the Neighborhood Farm farmers offered a free spring class on building compost bins and seeding and transplanting shortly before my visit. Anne said they tried to do a class every month. In addition, they were working with an intern from a local university organizing a “mini-farm camp” in one of the neighborhoods in which they were farming during the 2012 CSA season.

One of Rick’s goals was a working farm associated with a school where kids could grow some of the food they eat, learn how to farm, and go to school at the same time. Rick’s goals included a regional food system. Perhaps, he said, their farm could be an example so people would have more appreciation for what farmers do and how food is grown. He talked about

people stopping by the farm sites and things they noticed as they saw the farm site changing.

Rick was not just thinking about Neighborhood Farm, however, he was thinking about all small scale agriculture. He said,

I don't want to be like just our farm that has that niche, as much as a place for people to learn about rural types of farming just in general. It definitely benefits our CSA, but also I'm hoping it will benefit farming and small scale agriculture everywhere. You know just by showing, you know showing an urban population that's removed from farming what it might look like on a bigger scale.

Other farms also participated in educational activities by hosting groups of students.

Fresh Face Farm entertained a group of summer youth in the 2011 CSA season and donated plant starts for gardens for three different nonprofit organizations. Classic Lake Farm normally hosted at least one group of students in the spring and in the fall. That did not happen, however, during the 2012 CSA season. Erik said he was just too busy, but he missed seeing the students. Erik said he usually complains about the group coming to the farm up to five minutes before the kids arrive. "But when I see them [the kids]" Erik said, "and the energy that they bring, I just love it." He also liked to watch the adults and how the adults changed just by being outside in nature.

Classic Lake Farm also participated in a training program for organic farmers. Erik sometimes continued working with these farmers-in-training even after the farmers finished the program by purchasing some of their vegetables for the Classic Lake CSA box. Vegetables like unexpected radishes in October. One of the farmers-in-training had radishes in October that he could not sell, so Erik included the radishes in one of the fall distributions. He wrote about the radishes in the October 4, 2011 Newsletter.

On another note, we have radishes in the box this week. Radishes!?! To be honest, the conversation on the CSA packing line this morning was around what the heck do we do with radishes right now? Well, I am still not sure what I will use them for. I put them in the box humbly. Jim, a first year farmer in our program, came to me yesterday saying he had great radishes and could not sell them. I decided it was worth supporting him by buying his radishes even though we did not plan for them. I hope you find a creative way to use and enjoy your radishes. Let me know if you come up with something good!

In its newsletter, Township Farm said that as a Community Supported Agriculture farm, they believed community support goes both ways. So, Township Farm donated three of its largest type of shares to local schools. This program, the newsletter said, served three purposes.

First is to give these schools some much needed dollars to cover the cost of educating the children who'll one day take over from us old folks. The second is our hope that by giving something nutritious it will spur families to start eating healthy food – perhaps a subtle reminder that much of the crap we feed our kids is not food. And third, it is our long term strategy to get the youngsters to eat the kinds of food we grow so that when they grow-up they feed their children nutritious food as well. We stole this idea from McDonalds – except we added the nutritious food part.

Pulling it All Together. Collecting the elements for my theme of Farmers: A Force for Good, was not difficult. What was difficult was pulling these disparate ideas together in a way that did justice to the individual elements as well as the overarching qualities of the farmers. My elements, 1) Farming as Craftsmanship; 2) Motivation, Meaning and Purpose; 3) Caring for the

Soil and Environment, and 4) Transfer of Knowledge individually represent different facets of the farmers' overall attitudes and values. Together, however, these elements present the farmers in my study in a way that reflects not only their commitment to farming, but also their dedication to their shareholders. This leads me to the next theme in my data. Is the dedication and commitment on the part of the farmers one-sided or is the dedication and commitment returned by the shareholders?

Lopsided Loyalty: Farmer vs. Shareholder

For the farmers in my study shareholders, not surprisingly, were front and center in terms of what the farmers did and decisions the farmers made. Just like any small business enterprise the customers were the focus. Whether or not this is what was "intended" in terms of community supported agriculture that is what I found. In some ways, perhaps, this is a good thing.

For Jeffrey from Township Farm, the interaction with the shareholders made it all worthwhile. "Certainly that is one of the rewards, happy customers. And you don't get that so much if you just sell to a grocery store. Right here, the way we do it [with on-farm pickup], that's positive." Jeffrey even wondered if kids might not grow up with a better appreciation for food simply because they were brought out to the farm for the weekly pickup.

Because the majority of his shareholders picked up on the farm, he saw at least some of his shareholders five days of the week. I was at Township Farm during one of the pickup days. The pickup time was 3:00 to 6:00. By 3:05 there were five cars in the yard and Jeffrey was in high gear making sure the tent stayed stocked with all the different vegetables, delivering fruit shares and flower shares to the appropriate shareholders and answering questions. During this time I was washing onions harvested earlier that morning in a 150-gallon water tank just across the driveway. This was my Observer's Comment from my transcripts:

O.C. It has now been about 15 minutes and I am washing onions and people are coming and going and Jeffrey is talking. It is very much like what I do when I have to schmooze [for my work]. The difference is that Jeffrey likes to do this. He has told me this is his favorite part. Well, you know what that means. There are a lot of compliments and questions and he is the expert and the purveyor of all things wonderful for those few minutes. Who wouldn't like that?

Jeffrey appeared energized by the process and heartily welcomed each shareholder (most of them by name) as they drove on the yard. I did notice, however, that he frequently checked the time on his phone, but only when no shareholders were around.

On-Farm pickup was great for farmer/shareholder interaction. When I was talking to one of the Neighborhood Farm shareholders, she said her biggest surprise was that the farmer talked to her while she was picking up her food. Sometimes, this shareholder said, when she picked up on a Friday afternoon she just wanted to pick up her veggies and go, but the farmers insisted on talking.

From the Farmers' Perspective. Township Farms said it was one of very few "real" CSAs because 100% of its revenue came from CSA shareholders. That meant the shareholders split all the produce raised on the farm and the farm had no other revenue streams. That, Jeffrey said, assured that his shareholders were always getting the best and the freshest produce available. The implication was that other CSAs with delivery boxes would be tempted to put their second rate produce in the boxes and take their most attractive (and freshest) produce to the farmers market or the grocery stores or restaurants.

This, however, was not the case for Fresh Face Farm. For Serena and Jack when they were packing their vegetable box or making any decision, their motto was "CSA First." "CSA is

top priority” Serena said, “because they funded this adventure this season I need them to get the best of everything, so they’re top priority.” Jack, the assistant farm manager agreed. “But CSA first... that’ll give you all the answers. How do you determine? CSA first for sure and if you don’t have enough [for all the CSA shareholders] then you can take stuff to market.”

Both Jack and Serena were adamant about the delivery box getting the best of everything. But there is going to be extra. In the first year Serena had only 20 CSA shareholders and she had, out of insecurity she said, overplanted by at least double. That meant she had food ready for harvested nearly every day of the week and her CSA deliveries were done on Thursday. It would not work to have produce leaving the farm only once a week. Serena explained:

The idea of having produce only leaving the farm one day a week is...I miss so much harvest or I have to stick stuff in the cooler for a week. And this way I have stuff leaving the farm, well, let’s see. I have stuff leaving the farm four days a week which is huge. But the CSA gets everything first.

The week before I was at her farm, she and Jack had harvested nearly 100 pounds of broccoli. “Obviously” she said, “the CSA can’t get all of that.” They gave each shareholder 1-1/4 pounds of broccoli and sold 40 pounds to the Coop and the remaining broccoli she said, “we’ll eat or freeze or something...because I overplanted.” But, the shareholders would come first.

At the same time, Serena said one piece of advice she got from the farmer in Connecticut with whom she interned was never, even in the beginning, do something for one shareholder you can not do for 200 shareholders. All shareholders must be treated equally in every respect. This created a real conundrum for Serena when one of her shareholders asked if she could purchase peas from Serena, at the market price, and have the peas delivered with her CSA share.

This was an unusual situation in two ways because the shareholder had originally signed

up for on-farm pickup. After the first week, however, the shareholder discovered it was almost a 30-minute drive each way from her home to the farm and that was just too far to drive. After some discussion Serena realized this shareholder's home was on her way to deliver the other CSA boxes. So, Serena said she could do home-delivery for this shareholder for the first year and perhaps the next year this shareholder's home could become a drop site.

So, when Serena got the pea request in response to the home delivery offer it was a difficult situation. Serena had peas available and the shareholder said she was willing to pay the market rate for the peas. Since Serena would be driving by her home the next day on her way to the farmers market anyway, could Serena deliver some peas? Serena decided since she could not offer all her shareholders the same "service," she would not sell her extra peas to this shareholder. It was a hard decision for Serena to make. She said,

And this was a really hard question for me, a really hard question because it goes to so much about CSA being first. It actually wasn't a money issue for me because I would be fine and be like Yeah, I'll sell you peas at the same price that I would sell at the farmers market. But I said no because I was like, I'm glad you enjoyed the box. I'm glad you liked the peas. Unfortunately I have to say no to you buying extra peas because it's not something I can offer to all shareholders. I can't offer that. I can't offer bringing extra food to everybody, not everybody's close enough.

I noticed a new page on the Fresh Face Farm website during the 2013 CSA season where shareholders can purchase extra produce as it is available on a first-come, first-served basis to be delivered with their CSA box.

Erik from Classic Lake Farm was also concerned about what shareholders thought about their CSA box, but his concern came from a little bit different direction. He was concerned that perhaps the CSA boxes would not live up to the expectations that people might have. “These are upper class folks [and] we’re selling them something they’ve seen on Martha Stewart and...I guess the question is always, ‘Are we keeping up to that standard for them?’”

The idea that Martha Stewart liked CSAs, although a boon to their shareholder numbers, added a layer of “expectation” Erik found almost intimidating. He said, “As the farmer, as my own person it’s really easy for me to feel indebted to these folks because we are, you know they’re keeping us afloat and that’s fantastic.” Keep in mind farmers are frequently providing fresh vegetables to shareholders who make far more money than the farmers themselves (O’Leary, 2010, Lass, et al., 2005, Hinrichs, 2000, Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005) and Erik was concerned about living up to these expectations. He thought the boxes from his farm ranked high in terms of quantity and quality. But, he said, “I don’t know, I haven’t seen a lot of CSA boxes in Minnesota.” He thought shareholders might prefer more of the salad greens “those micro green type things.” But, he had not had time to develop that “product.”

Even as he was writing the newsletter, Erik was concerned shareholders would be disappointed that in addition to a being farmer, he was not also a “real foodie.” He said he cooked a lot and he liked food a lot, but “I’m not really a foodie in the sense that I can write a newsletter (laugh) every week about it. So that’s been a little bit of a struggle every week this year.” Again, Erik seemed to be measuring himself against this image or perception of what he thought shareholders were looking for in terms of “high class.” So, Erik kept working harder.

Putting the shareholder first means a lot of different things. For some of the farmers one of the things that meant was long working hours. Rick and Anne from Neighborhood Farms

worked significantly more than a 40-hour week. When I visited the farm Rick had just taken a weekend off after working five 14-hour days in a row. “Full-time”, according to Rick, “is a terrible understatement based on how much we get paid and how many hours.”

Anne worked similar hours.

I haven’t taken a day without any farm work since I was down in Decorah like two weeks ago. Yeah, like I took the day off from field work on Thursday, but I spent like six hours doing admin CSA stuff, tidying up the wash station a little, working on the trailer, and I only weeded for like two hours on Saturday so that’s pretty much a day off.

Both Anne and Rick talked about a farming documentary in which farmers were compared to endurance athletes.

Neighborhood Farm was not the only farm cataloging these kinds of hours. Jackie from Urban Farm logged hundreds of hours working on the fledgling CSA in the previous season as a volunteer. She did not even report all of her volunteer hours. “Actually that statistic doesn’t fully include my volunteer hours because I was over...I like cut it off at half or something like that ‘cause nobody else [that] is going to do that.”

This brings up another issue with farming. Farmers will, at times, exploit themselves rather than risk the displeasure or disappointment of the shareholder. According to their website, the average hourly wage for Neighborhood Farm farmers was \$6.75 per hour. This issue was also raised by DeLind (1999) who in her two years as a CSA farmer said that they would rather exploit themselves than disappoint a shareholder. “In classic farmer fashion” said DeLind, “we personally absorbed the risk and gave away our labor (and our hearts) in the process” (p. 6).

What the shareholder receives in exchange for the money spent is probably one of the best “deals” available. These farmers put their heart and soul into growing and delivering fresh vegetables to their shareholders. Jeffrey from Township Farm included this post in his blog after talking about the long days of work that had been put in during the past week.

But maybe they don’t understand the personal nature of this business, that we are a community of like-minded people. And by providing this service to our community we are giving our customers a gift, not just of food, but of personal service that is hard to find in today’s cost cutting, money-grubbing corporate America.

From the Shareholder’s Perspective. Normally in a farmer-driven CSA the bulk of responsibility falls on the farmer, but what role do the shareholders play in the implementation of the community supported agriculture ideal? Results from my survey indicated that shareholders value their relationship with the farmer. One hundred and one out of 151 returned surveys Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement “Being acquainted with my CSA farmer is important to me (us).” In addition 123 out of 151 survey Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement “I plan to purchase a share from this CSA next year.” At least from the shareholders willing to take the time to return surveys there appeared to be a high degree of loyalty.

In addition to the surveys I conducted telephone interviews with 13 shareholders from the three farms participating during the 2012 CSA season. The interviewees were from Township Farm, Neighborhood Farm, and Classic Lake Farm. Overall the interviews were very positive about the farm, the farmer and the produce. There were little glitches along the way like too many green beans or too many peppers or three heads of cabbage in one box, but for the most part everyone was happy. I asked each interviewee about their biggest surprise, their biggest

disappointment, and what they would do if their farmer decided to sell his produce to a middleman who would then pack and distribute their boxes with produce from any number of different farms.

Shareholder surprises followed pretty standard lines like how good the tomatoes tasted and how much shorter the storage time is for fresh vegetables vs. vegetables bought in the store and how different the vegetables were from year to year. “The first year we had carrots once in a while” said Mary from Classic Lake Farm, “and the second year we got 5000 pounds of carrots.” I heard something similar from Daniel at Classic Lake Farm, only for Daniel it was green beans. “Last year we got so many green beans...every week. We had problems using all of them and the next week OMG More Green Beans!”

Daniel said he enjoyed being introduced to new vegetables. “It would be very easy to be a farmers market person and just choose things that you recognize” he said. He would not have chosen many of the vegetables he received. But, he said, “There they were and we had to deal with them.” Daniel was not the only one with educational moments that came along with the CSA box.

Beth, also a Classic Lake Farm shareholder said she was surprised there were vegetables in the box that “I did not know what they were. I thought I was pretty well-educated in the vegetable department, but there were things that I had never seen.” This was a nice surprise, however, and she said her roommates at the time guided her through her first CSA season. In her second CSA season she and her husband were in for a big surprise. “We found out that we really like kale.”

For Amanda, a shareholder from Township Farm, the whole thing was a learning experience and she really liked the way Jeffrey recognized her and was willing to answer her

questions. She also appreciated that the recipes came out ahead of time so she could make sure she got what she needed at the grocery store before she went to pick up her share at the farm. Her CSA from the previous year did not give her any choices or any forewarning about what was going to be in that week's share. She said she loved the choice she had at Township Farm. "If you know you do not like brussel sprouts there are always options," she said. Because of the choice, she could try something new and if they decided they did not like it, she would not choose that item again.

Amanda started the CSA membership because she wanted her daughter to learn to eat healthily. She said this was the first time she was really doing much cooking. She grew up in a family eating what she called "a traditional American diet" (which she defined as packaged and processed). "It is all new to me and I had to learn that you can't just leave stuff sit on the shelf too long." But she said she loved the experience and she liked knowing who her farmer was and her farmer knowing who she was.

Lynn, a Township Farm shareholder, was also surprised by the uniqueness of the vegetables and she said she never would have purchased them in the store, but the vegetables were there in the box and they ate most of them. The CSA was important to Lynn because she wanted her children to understand where food came from and she wanted her children to eat vegetables. Her children were not "big fans of new foods" but they did try a lot of the farm vegetables.

Maggie was just surprised at how much she liked going out to Township Farm every week. "I was surprised at how much I look forward to going to pick up at the farm. Every week I go to the farm wondering what I might learn or hear or experience." Bonnie, also a Township Farm shareholder was surprised to learn she actually liked vegetables as much as she did. She

said she had never really been interested in vegetables before, but her husband had been a vegetarian, so she decided to try it and found out she really liked it.

As mentioned earlier, Betty at Neighborhood Farm said picking up her vegetables on a Friday afternoon was an interesting experience because sometimes she just wanted to pick up her stuff and get going, but the farmers wanted to talk. She said she liked it, however, when the farmers would point to something still in the field and say, “That is what you will be getting next week.”

These are some of the experiences and surprises shareholders talked about during our interviews. Most of these experiences are personal individualistic experiences. There was very little that reflected community in our interviews. It was the experience of the shareholder knowing the farmer or the experience of the shareholder learning about new vegetables or how to prepare or store the vegetables. There were only two shareholders who, in passing, talked about the experience of seeing or talking to other shareholders during on-farm pickup.

One of those shareholders was Betty who was sometimes irritated with the additional time required for conversations with the farmers, other shareholders, and neighbors. Betty wanted to pick up and go, but the community experience and conversations took time. In retrospect she said her experience was positive, but from her description it appeared to be a challenging, if not difficult, experience at the time she was actually picking up her vegetables.

The other shareholder that talked about community was Bonnie. She had been a shareholder at Township Farm since Jeffrey’s first CSA season. After the first year she was going to drop her membership because she said she could not justify driving so far every week to pick up vegetables. Jeffrey asked if she wanted her home to be a drop site and she was thrilled with the idea. She said it was so much easier now to justify the drive because she knew other

people were going to benefit and she liked being able to do that kind of favor for other “like-minded” people. The problem, she said, was shareholders would come and pick up their vegetables from her garage and she rarely saw them.

The Survey Says. Although the surveys returned a high level of satisfaction among the shareholders, there was not a great interest in community. Only 15 returned surveys reported attending one or more social events at the farm. Of those 15, ten of the responses indicated the shareholder had attended four or more events, indicating that most of the attendees were “repeat” attendees. Several of the shareholders said their farm did not have social events. In the case of Neighborhood Farm, since it was the first year of the combined farms, it is possible shareholders were not aware of the events the farm sponsored. Or it is possible the events sponsored by the Neighborhood Farm farmers were not publicized as well as the farmers perceived them to be.

The process of picking up the CSA share contributed to the sense of community reported by survey respondents. Ninety-four out of 151 shareholders indicated that they felt like part of a community when they picked up their share. There was a small difference in the proportion of positive responses to this question based on whether the shareholders picked up their share on the farm or from a drop site. For the two farms in my study with on-site pickups, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they felt like part of a community when picking up their share. The farm in my study with drop sites had slightly more than half of the respondents reporting a sense of community as part of picking up their share. There were 25 survey respondents indicating they were not inclined to renew their membership for the next year. Of the 25 respondents, ten were on-farm pickup and 15 were drop site pickups.

The Question of Loyalty. Keeping in mind that 123 out of 151 returned surveys indicated the shareholder planned to buy a share from their farm again the next year, I asked the

interviewees what they would do if their farmer decided to sell the produce from their farm to a third party. This third party would then prepare and deliver their CSA share. The majority of interviewees said they would look elsewhere for their vegetables because they wanted to work with a small farm and they wanted to know their farmer. Bonnie, whose home was a drop site for Township Farm, said, “Oh, I don’t know. I would be really disappointed if someone else was in the middle. We’ve been with Jeffrey since his first season as a CSA.” Betty from Neighborhood Farm did not hesitate. “I think it would make a difference” she said. “I think I would find a different one. I want to support a local farmer.”

Three shareholders said they would consider staying with the farm if the farm’s produce was sold to a third party. One of those shareholders said she believed the farmer would only sell his produce to a reputable reseller so she would trust the farmer’s decision to sell. The other two shareholders who said they would consider staying with a restructured CSA said it would depend on convenience and cost.

Relationship is Important. The relationship with the farmer was important for most of the shareholders that I interviewed and for 101 of the shareholders who returned the survey. My survey, however, did not define what a “relationship with the farmer” entailed. Fifteen of the survey respondents who said their relationship with the farmer was important also said they had never met their farmer. It could be these survey respondents did not understand the questions or for these individuals it was simply the idea of the CSA that entailed the relationship and these shareholders placed their “faith” in the idea of the CSA without needing to meet their farmer. One of the comments from the surveys provided a third possibility. This shareholder said she knew the farmers well enough from the newsletters and emails. “The weekly emails from my

CSA provide helpful information about the produce and farmers” she said. “No need to meet them ‘in person’ because there have been opportunities to meet them in the newsletter.”

Relationship Tested. When a CSA shareholder purchased a share in the spring, did the shareholder really understand what was meant when they signed the agreement saying they were sharing the risk with the farmer? What if there was a real crop failure, would the farmer really let the shareholder be disappointed? The idea of community supported agriculture has morphed from an arrangement that really involved community into a retail product that is more like a subscription than a share.

In a situation where an investor or shareholder is actually sharing the risk, it normally means if the risk pays off the investor or shareholder gets more back than they initially paid. In most cases, however, that is not happening with community supported agriculture. If there is an abundance of tomatoes, the shareholders may get a few more tomatoes than usual, but the bulk of the excess will probably go to market. If the farm has a bad year, however, the investor or shareholder will potentially lose some or all of what they invested. Consequently, with the subscription-based community supported agriculture farm, the shareholder is only sharing in the risk of a bad year and not in the potential bounty of a good year according to Jeffrey from Township Farm.

Jeffrey, as mentioned previously, said his farm was one of the few 100% CSA farms in Minnesota since shareholders get all of the produce from his farm. So for Jeffrey’s shareholders if there was an abundance of tomatoes, those tomatoes all go to the shareholders. But, there is another way to look at this. Since CSA farmers must overplant in order to make sure they have enough for shareholders (the average rate to overplant was 15%) and since overplanting is expensive should that excess become the “property” of the shareholders?

Most shareholders I interviewed said it was already difficult for them to use up all the vegetables they received on a weekly basis. However, only one third of the survey respondents indicated agreement with the statement, “I (we) get more food than I (we) can eat in my CSA share.” Seventy-six out of 151 or just over half Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with that statement. Most shareholders, however, probably would not want a full “share” of what is grown on the farm. For example, Fresh Face Farm harvested 100 pounds of broccoli. If that were to be distributed between its 20 shareholders, everyone would have received five pounds of broccoli. Serena did not think most people would appreciate five pounds of broccoli and she did not want to overwhelm her shareholders. Maybe someone would not mind getting ten pounds of tomatoes but, she said, they probably would not want ten pounds of broccoli.

The farmers at Neighborhood Farm said the same thing. In addition, Anne said, not everyone is a canner or preserver anymore and people go out of town. “You know, people don’t prioritize food as we should all summer.” Maggie, a Township Farm shareholder, said it was difficult for her to always manage all the produce from the farm because there were so many demands on her time during the summer. But, she felt so much guilt if she let food spoil. Several of the other shareholders I interviewed expressed the same guilty sentiments. Only one shareholder said she thought the share was too small. However, this shareholder was splitting her share with another household to cut down on the cost because she was on a fixed income, as a result she was really only working with half a share.

So we are back to the idea of a subscription-based arrangement or essentially pre-paying for fresh vegetables. For farmers the revenue from farmers market, restaurants, and grocery stores levels the income stream in situations where the farm does not sell as many shares as anticipated. Sometimes, too, there may be more vegetables harvested than the farmer can use,

but not enough of the vegetable to provide equal shares for all the shareholders. For example, if the farmer has 100 shareholders and 80 heads of lettuce, what does the farmer do? In situations like this, the farmers market, restaurant, or grocery store outlet is necessary to avoid spoilage.

I asked shareholders about sharing the risk with the farmer. They all said they knew what I was talking about, but none of them had actually experienced a situation where they might not have gotten everything they “paid for.” I asked Marla, a shareholder from Classic Lake Farm, about crop failures. She said usually there is a crop that does not thrive. “They make it up with something else. You always get a decent amount. But that is part of the deal and we know it.”

The key here is when Marla says, “They make it up with something else.” Where does that something else come from? If the farmer’s crop has failed and they are making it up with something else, that something else presumably comes out of the farmer’s pocket. So is the idea of “shared risk” a reality or is it just empty talk?

Erik from Classic Lake Farm said that was something different this year when he went to the CSA Fair earlier in the spring. More people were asking whether or not the farm had irrigation.

That's the question I get a lot more now from members when they first think about signing up is if we have irrigation because I think there's been a lot of members who have been burned by farms that don't have any irrigation. It never used to be as big of an issue as it's become.

Erik made the comment after talking about another nearby farm that started a CSA during the 2012 CSA season.

That new CSA was having trouble filling their boxes because of the drought and hot weather and they did not have irrigation. Instead of allowing their shareholders to “take the hit”

they began using their other products such as goat cheese and meat chickens to fill their boxes and substitute for the vegetables. That may be fine from the shareholder's perspective, but normally meat chickens would be a fall product and something the farmers would use to smooth out their revenue stream for the fall and winter months. So, instead of the community rallying to support a struggling new farmer, the farmer substitutes other products.

One shareholder said the farmers were getting joy out of the act of farming and the farmers probably would not want to do anything else anyway. The implication seemed to be that because the farmers got joy out of farming that should be enough. The farmers, however, still need to sell enough vegetables to make a living.

In some cases I might have agreed with this shareholder about farmers getting joy out of the act of farming, but earlier in the interview she had commented about how expensive it was to purchase a share. This shareholder had dropped her membership for the first few weeks of the 2012 season because she had given so many vegetables away the year before. She was pleased when the farm, at her request, implemented a less expensive every-other-week share for the 2013 season. She went on to say that:

They [the farmers] just have this fundamental belief in the land and what it can produce with this kind of love and attention and joy. That is why for years I picked it [the share] up on the farm. I loved the experience, driving on the back roads with the top down, seeing the farm was something I looked forward to. But now because of the time crunch, especially with summers getting hotter, I want to spend more time at our cabin.

Does this shareholder understand or appreciate what a crop failure would really mean?

Subscription Farming? The CSA share, instead of being an investment in a farm or a way of life or a community, has moved down a different path and has now become more of a commercial product or subscription. Erik from Classic Lake Farm was contacted by an individual asking if the farm would be willing to allow him to act as a middleman and distribute the produce. Erik said, “He was calling it a CSA and he was taking all the money like a CSA.” But, the middleman would not have any risk.

This middleman, Erik said, would be “buying stuff from farmers and if that farmer doesn’t have any, you [the middleman] buy it from someone else.” This arrangement would use the CSA label, but would eliminate the relationship with the farmer and the whole concept of community. Shareholders would not know where the vegetables had actually come from or, for that matter, which farm had actually grown the vegetables. If the middleman does not like one farmer’s carrots, the farmer is “stuck” while the middleman goes to the next farmer on his list. Erik said,

If you are taking all the money upfront then you don’t have any risk. You don’t have a farm, you’re just taking the money and buying stuff from farmers and if that farmer doesn’t have any you buy it from someone else.

This is what happens when the CSA label is genericized and commoditized, the relationship with the farmer is removed and the commitment on the part of the shareholder is gone. It is no longer community supported agriculture and the farmers are back to being at the mercy of the middleman. In that case, if the crop fails, the farmer does not get paid. So the community supported idea is definitely a benefit to the farmer if the “community supported” part of the name is real.

If there is a disaster (flood, tornado, hail) one year and everything is ruined, will the relationships with the farm and farmer be enough to pull the farmer through to next year? Will the shareholders accept the loss with equanimity and grace or will they find a new farm? We are back to the question of loyalty. The farmers have proved themselves to be quite dedicated and aware of the role they play in the experience of the shareholder. It is not clear from the data that the shareholders have the same understanding. That makes the idea of community even more important, especially to the farmers.

CSA: Community...Really?

People have different ideas about what “community” means and for shareholders the “experience” of community seems to be an individualistic experience, rather than a group experience. Most frequently what people described as “community” related to a good feeling or an enjoyable experience or a relationship with the farmer. At least that is what it looked like at first. After reviewing the data, another interpretation, although still relatively individualistic, is possible. But first, this is what people said about the idea of community.

For farmers, most frequently, the idea of community seemed to be connected to not needing to “sell” anymore or having a loyal customer base that would allow them to skip the CSA fairs and marketing brochures in the spring. Taking into consideration all the “hats” the CSA farmer must wear in addition to being a farmer, this view or desire for community was not surprising. This type of community, however, is difficult to create.

Not all experiences of community are pleasant experiences, and community can not be built on guarantees of loyalty. Community is voluntary and usually involves giving up something for the good of the larger group. This frequently means some type of sacrifice (Groh & McFadden, 2000). Based on the idea of lopsided loyalty previously discussed, there may be

reason to question shareholder commitment if the shareholder's expectations are not met by the farmer and the perceived value of the shareholder's investment is not adequately realized.

A lot has happened to the "community-supported" name. The idea is easily adapted to all kinds of similar business models. One CSA in my study was also selling "shares" of community-supported art (CSA). This arrangement allowed shareholders to go to a local community art gallery and pick out a piece of art by selected artists each month. "Without even having to change the abbreviation, the C.S.A. idea has made the leap from agriculture to art" (Kennedy, 2013). In some cases it is simply an investment and financing scheme with the idea of community being secondary. Is the idea of community just a nice idea or does the community in community supported agriculture still have something for the farmers?

Shareholder Experiences of Community. There were some shareholders who expressed a genuine interest in the idea of community, but what they were looking for or what they were expecting seemed to be something that does not exist without putting in some time and effort (i.e. commitment). Following are a few of the most obvious expressions of a desire for community from the shareholders.

Daniel Dimmel – Classic Lake Farm. Daniel Dimmel owned a local coffee shop and restaurant and said he really wanted to work with the farm to tell the farm's story and so he volunteered to become a drop site. Daniel also admitted that he did not want to have to drive to pick up his share and he bought the coffee shop he owned because he wanted to be able to walk to work. Daniel considered his shop to be sort of a neighborhood gathering spot, so having people "pick up" at his shop just seemed right. He liked people coming in to the shop, even if it was only to pick up the box because even if people come in just to pick up their box, Daniel said "they [the shareholders] still recognize and understand that there is a sense of being in a

community...they are part of something that all works together.”

As much as Daniel said he wanted and liked that sense of community, he seemed at a loss of how to make it happen in a bigger fashion. He said he wished there was something he could do to make it [the CSA] go all year. It would not necessarily even have anything to do with a box of food, he said. But he did not know what it would be. Supporting a local farm was a very important part of his decision and he wished there was more he could do. He said he wanted to know his purchase of vegetables (both as a shareholder and as a restaurant) made a difference and so he wanted to be sure he was working with a small local farmer.

But, Daniel was also a business owner and he said he wanted to know if there was a problem he could pick up the phone and talk directly to the farmer. So, in essence, the small local farm choice was also a business decision. If he, as a customer and shareholder, was important to the farmer, his needs as a business owner were more likely to be met.

As much as Daniel said he wanted to extend the sense of community and the idea of being “part of something that all works together” he had never been out to the farm. He was aware of the volunteer opportunities in the early spring and fall, but found the distance to the farm to be a real impediment. He regrets not having a physical connection with the farm and if he were to look for a different CSA, proximity would be an important part of his choice.

Betty Barner – Neighborhood Farm. For Betty Barner, a shareholder from Neighborhood Farm, the sense of community came from the food being grown right in her neighborhood. She said she would sometimes drive out of her way (only slightly) to see some of the plots and “watch the system working.” As described earlier, Betty viewed her vegetable pickup on Friday afternoons as an “interesting meditation” because the farmers and other shareholders wanted to talk and she just wanted to pick up her vegetables and go. In the end, she

said she enjoyed the pickup even if she sometimes found it annoying. The reason she chose Neighborhood Farm was because they were in her neighborhood and yet she was not sure if she was going to sign up again for the next season.

Betty was a member of two CSAs during the 2012 season and she said it was more vegetables than she could handle. The other CSA was actually Fresh Face Farm and she said sometimes she preferred the anonymity of just picking up the box and being on her way. But, yet she loved the You Pick Flower option Neighborhood Farm included with her share. She said she was surprised by “how much I loved getting a flower share. I loved that! I loved that a lot.” Even if it was only a flower or two some weeks she loved coming home with the flowers.

Originally Betty’s CSA selection was influenced by two things. She wanted a small farm and she wanted something local because she too wanted to make a difference to the farmer. Her experience of community when she picked up her vegetables was sometimes challenging. It was not what she was looking for, but in retrospect she said it was a good thing. She also said she liked seeing the food growing in her neighborhood even though she did not frequently see the farmers in the fields nearest to her apartment.

Although Betty was not actually looking for an experience of community when she purchased her Neighborhood Farm CSA share, she did experience a sense of community. In some ways the community experience was a bit irksome and, in some ways, endearing. More importantly, however, was the idea that Betty signed up for the CSA share because the farm was in her neighborhood and she had an appreciation and sense of support (or loyalty?) for what was happening in her immediate physical community.

Brandy Moffit – Neighborhood Farm. Brandy Moffit was interested in experiencing a sense of community, especially for her daughters. That was one of the reasons she chose an

urban farm. One of her disappointments, however, was that she frequently did not see the same farmer every week at her pickup site. She said she only saw her farmer from the previous year one time. That was a disappointment for Brandy because she became acquainted with that farmer and she felt as if she had been instrumental in his success as a first-year farmer.

Despite not seeing last year's farmer, she still was interested enough in a community experience that she participated in two shareholder events sponsored by Neighborhood Farm. But, she was also disappointed in the events. She said the farmers were "trying to do something because there is more disconnect [between their farms in two different cities] than they would like." When she and a friend showed up at a Salsa/Bike Tour Event on Labor Day weekend, however, she did not feel comfortable. Brandy described her experience this way.

When we got there, the majority was drinking somewhat heavily and people were smoking and I am allergic to smoke. There wasn't alcohol everywhere, but it is not my scene. I do not "fit" with these people. They did try to make more of a community, but I am not sure they got to know who their members were before they started scheduling these things to build community.

Brandy was interested in meeting people and she wanted to become a "part" of the farm community particularly because of her children. She mentioned several times that her mother had a real "green thumb" and she felt like her children were not getting something important from her as a mom. She wanted her children to understand where food comes from so the urban farm and the "You Pick" options were very important to her.

She thought this farm event would be an opportunity to meet "like-minded" people. She was disappointed to find, however, that the shareholders at this farm event were, what she described as, substantially younger than herself. (She was 41.) She also said she had no interest

in riding a bike for the bike tour. Since the event had been advertised as a bike tour I was not clear on exactly what she was expecting, but she thought the farmers should make more effort to “know” their shareholders, although she admitted that it might be difficult for the farmers to “know” everyone.

Kaari Kimmel – Classic Lake Farm. Kaari Kimmel, a shareholder from Classic Lake Farm, was interested in creating a community within her own church which was also a drop site for Classic Lake Farm. After she visited the farm for the Fall Harvest party she was so excited she got together with some other people from her church that “do CSAs.” She said her church was getting more active in the environmental movement and Kaari thought the CSA idea fit right in.

Kaari’s small group, which included two retired home economists and a soil scientist, wanted to promote healthy eating and the kind of food production that “protects the environment.” However, she experienced some pushback from other church members. Kaari called her group a small community. But, she said, “They [other members of the church] call us a club now. It is so disparaging.”

It was difficult to know the entire situation, but Kaari said some people did not want to even talk about it [environmental issues]. Despite the pushback, Kaari and her group were moving forward and working to promote Classic Lake Farm to other church members and to a low income housing unit owned by the church. She and her group were also promoting the use of environmentally good foods at all church events. She was very proud of her position as a CSA shareholder and actively worked with Erik and the larger organization to promote the CSA at church events. She said her visit to the farm for the Fall Harvest Party really made her feel connected to the farm.

Amanda Anderson – Township Farm. Amanda Anderson from Township Farm said she felt more like part of a community at Township Farm than she had felt at the CSA where she had been a member the previous year. Our conversation was more about what she did not like about the previous farm than about what went on at Township Farm. But, the most important thing to her was that Jeffrey remembered her name and always had time to answer her questions. “I am willing to drive farther to have the communication and interaction with the farmer...I like knowing how my food is grown and I like that my farmer is willing to listen to suggestions.”

She said she was just learning to cook from scratch which meant she was using “not so much packaged food or processed stuff” after her daughter was born. So the fact that Jeffrey would talk to her about how to prepare some of the vegetables was enormously helpful to her. She said it took most of the afternoon to pick up her share because she lived so far away. However, because Jeffrey was so helpful she was willing to take the time and drive the miles for her food.

Community Is Not Easy. These “community” experiences are essentially individualistic occurrences where either the association with the farmer or the farm makes the shareholder feel good or important or generates a sense of goodwill. To build a community takes time and commitment. Community, like most other things is cyclical. It ebbs and flows with time (Groh & McFadden, 2000).

Of the two original CSAs from 1986, both of which had the idea of community front and center in their original objectives, Indian Hills CSA experienced a “difficult and painful split” (Henderson & VanEn, 2007, p. xv) after four years. Both of the farms resulting from the split are still operating, but the original community was not able to survive.

The other original farm, Temple-Wilton Community Farm, is still operating though their structure as a community farm is very different from the farmer-directed CSAs in my study. Still, Temple-Wilton Community Farm has experienced its own ups and downs in terms of community. Some of the challenges related to community were discussed in their book *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited* (Groh & McFadden, 2000). Community was not automatic, nor was it easy. As one Temple-Wilton Community Farm member put it,

We don't have all the answers, but we do have some of the questions. How are we going to continue to have sustainable farming? How do we save not just the soil, but also the farmer? Corporate agriculture is not the answer. (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 105)

In 1990 on the heels of a hot, dry summer and a poor harvest from the previous year, the farm came up \$13,000 short in their pledges for the 1990 season. Even though the organizing principles emphasized that farm membership meant you were pledging your support in good years and in bad, several families withdrew their membership and “the farm faced a serious crisis” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 112). The remaining members came together and came up with several innovative ideas to reduce costs and to help reduce the burden on the farmers. For the first time, one of the farmers said, “it has really begun to feel like a community farm” (p. 112).

The farmers in my study talked about community, but since these are farmer-run CSAs as opposed to actual community farms, it was hard to break apart the link between the idea of community and simple good-sense marketing. All the farmers talked about building a customer base they frequently referred to as community. Rick from Neighborhood Farm had some big

community goals, but the community goals also sounded a lot like a good marketing plan. Like the other farmers, he wanted to see community replace the need for advertising.

What I'm really hoping for is to not have to do advertising in the future. To get a group of people that is committed to the farm and working with them and just not always be searching for new members. I think that a lot of times the word community in CSA gets sort of left out. [It becomes] a subscription vegetable service which is not its intention at all. So that's like one of my goals.

The desire to have a committed group of shareholders that would allow them, as farmers, to forego the marketing efforts was a sentiment also expressed by Serena at Fresh Face Farm and Erik at Classic Lake Farm. This should not be a surprise. These people are farmers, not sales people/advertisers/marketing executives. These CSA farmers ended up with a lot of responsibilities in addition to growing vegetables.

Serena at Fresh Face Farm said she was planning to have a potluck dinner for her shareholders in the early fall after things slowed down a little. I asked if she considered the potluck to be community building or a marketing strategy. Even though she agreed the potluck was intended to deepen the relationship she had with her shareholders she said the potluck was not a marketing tool. She wanted her shareholders to see the fields and what she was doing.

I want people to come out here and see their food in the fields. I'm proud of what's going on here. And I mean I think it's important that people see what broccoli looks like in the ground. That's broccoli that they're going to eat, you know? A potluck is NOT a marketing tool because it's hard to make people come.

Erik at Classic Lake said the farm events created some feelings of community, but that feeling of community was fleeting.

We get our members out to them [farm events] and there'll be a couple hundred people out to the Fall Harvest Party and we usually get maybe ten or 15 folks to come out for Work Day in the spring. Some of them are CSA, a lot of them are more organizational people, but the CSA definitely gets a lot of people in for the parties in the spring and fall. But beyond that there's not really much [community] at all.

Erik might have been surprised to find out how "inspired" some of the Classic Lake shareholders were by the farm events. Kaari said the Fall Harvest Party was a chance to meet Erik and some of the other people from the organization and she said it made her feel much more connected to the farm. The Harvest Party was also what inspired her to more actively promote the CSA at her church.

It is easy to be idealistic about community supported agriculture and the idea of community. But despite all the idealism these farmers still need to make money. Farmers can not live on the satisfaction they get from farming.

One of the farmers I worked with said even though there was not a lot of money in farming, there was happiness – "lots of happiness." When I first heard this comment I thought I had captured a great quote. But when I mentioned the remark to Jeffrey from Township Farm he was quiet for a minute and then he asked, "Did that farmer have kids?" I said no. "That explains it" he said. "He doesn't have those expenses of all that kid stuff."

Jeffrey said, "You've got to make a living at it. Otherwise, it's not very happy and there's too many people going out of business." Serena from Fresh Face Farm agreed, "When it comes down to it" she said, "community supported agriculture is not going to pay your bills if it's only about community." She was right. Community is not going to pay her bills and she was heavily

in debt.

A 2005 study of CSA farmers in the Midwest found that the “average CSA total net return was \$6,642. This study also calculated the mean annual family income to be approximately \$23,500 for these Midwestern farmers (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005). “This income is just 53% of the average median household income for the nine states surveyed: \$44,568” (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005, p. 19). Of the farmers responding to the study, 57% did not believe their CSA income provided them with a fair wage. Paradoxically, however, 97% of this same group of farmers rated themselves as completely satisfied or satisfied most of the time with their CSA operations (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005).

There was talk about making money at the CSA Conference. One farmer/presenter put it this way,

We should not, as farmers, have any qualms about making a good living. It is one small step that we can make to counter that argument that these issues [environmental problems and hunger] are bigger than can be taken on themselves. Prior to farming, this farmer/presenter worked with low income households on the West Coast. He said he saw the kind of food these people received from local food shelves and it just was not healthy food.

Consequently, after his first year farming this farmer/presenter started a nonprofit through one of the local Emergency Food Networks (EFN). The EFN accepts tax-deductible donations and uses the donations to pay farmers one dollar per pound for the food they donate to the EFN. All CSA farmers overplant to make sure they have enough for their shareholders. This organization gives the farmers a place to go with their extra produce (as opposed to giving it to shareholders). Last year, the farmer/presenter said, he contributed almost 10,000 pounds of

produce to the EFN.

The farmer/presenter said the arrangement with the Emergency Food Network allowed him to contribute to what he called community in two ways. First, he said for the food shelf recipients, "This is real food and goes to the dignity of the recipient." Second, the one dollar per pound for contributed produce strengthened the local community because the money was staying in the community and not going to one of the four major grocery companies. For this farmer, community was not just his farm; it was the wider area in which he lived.

I knew a member of this farmer/presenter's CSA and I mentioned that I had seen his farmer at the conference. I got the following email from this shareholder a couple of days later.

The term customer seems to be increasingly replacing member in his written materials. The idea of share holder I think is even less frequent. So, with the drought last summer, it seemed that he was mainly driven by a goal to make sure we customers still got the commodities we paid for so that he would not look like a businessman who couldn't come through. I was thinking, as shareholders, we maybe shouldn't get any vegetables since as shareholders we should share the fate of lost crops due to a lack of rain. He, however, I think would say that a decision like that on his part would cause a big loss in his membership/customer base. (J. Holst, personal communication, 1.14.13).

If shareholders are becoming customers and the CSA share is turning into a vegetable subscription, community may not be the most important idea anymore. DeLind (1999) really wanted to make community the focal point of the CSA in which she participated, but she said it was difficult for many families to make time for one more commitment even though that commitment had to do with the food they ate and community supported agriculture. After the

second year DeLind was asked to leave the CSA because her focus on community was not viewed as a sustainable option.

CSAs have changed and shareholders have changed. Erik from Classic Lake Farm has been working with some sort of community supported agriculture for nearly 12 years and he said the people who became CSA members ten years ago were different than CSA members are today. Ten years ago, Erik said CSA members understood the farm crisis and even though health food was important, the local economy was important as well. These folks, he said, wanted to be involved. They wanted to do something to help farmers. But, as the idea of CSAs became popularized, Erik said the membership changed and the local concern, the idea of helping the farmers, became less of a motivating factor. Erik said as the CSA model became better known and more popular, it was like the desire to help and to be involved in the same way was gone. He said,

Like when you open up that broader pool to folks, people aren't necessarily coming with that deep philosophical bent. They might discover it eventually, but they are coming a lot of times more of like, 'I want the best produce, the freshest produce.'

If the motivation is just fresh produce, then Erik was concerned about that too. Because, he said, local produce is not always the best produce. In a bad year "some of that stuff from California looks better than some of the local stuff looks." That is why Erik wanted more than just fresh produce as a selling point for CSA. In other words, he said you can not build a reliable community with only fresh produce because there is too much variability (and consequently risk) with fresh produce.

Erik said other CSA farmers agreed with him. More than ever before, according to Erik,

the biggest interest for shareholders seemed to be the vegetables. “Maybe you can throw in a story about the farm every week” Erik said, but it is hard to know what to do to establish relationships and community. He struggled with balancing the ideas of fresh produce and a farm story and attempting to build community every week as he wrote the newsletter. He said,

So figuring out that balance and, I don’t know, I struggle with that here and what exactly our role in that balance is. That doesn’t always feel like a community. You know it feels like we have ten to 20 folks who are definitely a part of our community and another ten to 30 who are definitely on board and interested in what we do, but I don’t really know them super well and everyone else is kind of in the ether out there.

It was even tougher for Erik during the summer because most of his interactions with shareholders were “just one sentence [email] complaints about not getting the box or not getting this. And then another 20 or so saying, ‘Great Job’ and someone said, ‘Black Beans, Awesome,’ that was the whole email.” It was hard to gauge what was really happening with those minimal interactions. In addition, when those emails were coming in, Erik was the busiest and the farm was demanding most of his energies and time.

The lack of time to really “work” on relationships was brought up several times by farmers at the CSA Conference. One CSA farmer said they did not do any farm tours between Memorial Day and Labor Day, even though they had multiple requests and even though that was when the farm looked the best and even though farm tours were the “most important way we can interface with people.” A farm tour, for this farmer, required four to five volunteers or farm employees to manage a tour and there just was not that kind of time during the summer months.

So the churches, youth groups, and schools had to do their tours early in the spring or later in the fall.

Even waiting until late in the fall could engender extra work. In the fall of 2012 this farmer said they picked all the pumpkins two weeks early because they were worried about frost. Then they had to put the pumpkins back in the field just before the fourth graders from a local school came out for their tour so the fourth graders could “pick” the pumpkins.

This same “lack of time” sentiment was echoed during the plenary session at the CSA Conference. Small groups talked about the biggest challenges and opportunities involved with community supported agriculture and several of the small groups talked about the difficulty in engaging people, especially as shareholders become accustomed to social media. With social media replacing phone calls or face-to-face meetings, it was a challenge to make lasting connections, especially if the farm was a long way from the urban area it was serving. At the end of the day, one farmer said, even though the farmers may have the passion, it was becoming more of a challenge to inspire passion as CSA membership became more of a subscription-type relationship.

Selling CSA shares is not an easy thing to do. None of the farmers I talked to expressed any affinity toward that activity at all. But, it is something that all of them knew they had to do. I was chided by Serena at Fresh Face Farm because of my own idealism about community supported agriculture. I complained about a very pushy salesperson at one of the CSA fairs. Serena said,

But, you know what...I mean you have to sell shares to be a CSA farmer. Your livelihood depends on it and they need to sell shares. Because when it comes down to it, community supported agriculture is not going to pay your bills if it's

only about community. If it's not about, you know, I mean that's great we can all get together and live on a commune and shit in a hole or whatever...like that's not a sustainable life for anybody in terms of energy, in terms of finances, it's not. I think that there's a way to have an income and a successful true CSA, but I think that trying to sell shares is part of that. And you have to do it. So maybe the approach [pushy salespeople] wasn't the best, but I have the exact same goal as they do and it's to sell shares and, you know, I like to grow vegetables. So it's, you know, it's tricky.

Serena was right. She needed to sell in order to stay afloat and community does not pay the bills. But getting people to pay for vegetables is not easy either, especially when U.S. shoppers are spending less of their disposable income than ever before on food. The percentage of post-tax income that is spent on food by the average U.S. household decreased from 16.8% in 1984 to 11.2% in 2011. The U.S. spends less of its income on food than any other developed country (Gambrell, 2013).

According to Michael Pollan, (2013, speech) we [eaters in the U.S.] have become addicted to cheap food. So, what would impel someone to purchase a CSA share? Could the idea of community create that competitive advantage?

Counterculture and CSA. CSA started out as a countercultural option that allowed shareholders to sidestep the grocery store and middleman and develop a direct relationship with the farmer. The first CSAs were about community, but this countercultural aspect of CSA has been increasingly blunted by growing consumerism (Press & Arnould, 2011; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a). Now, instead of being a countercultural choice, in some cases the CSA option is a status symbol, a fad, a trend, or just another commercial enterprise. In addition, there

is the concern that CSA could become a marketing process rather than a community-based experience (Groh & McFadden, 2000). McFadden (Groh & McFadden, 2000) suggested what he called a ludicrous possibility of a nation-wide CSA franchise.

Olde McDonald's CSA, for example, with actors dressed as 'Olde Farmer McDonald,' wearing neatly pressed overall and checked-shirt uniforms, handing out baskets of berries and bananas to the patrons and their children. It depends on whether large food corporations ever see the potential for profit; and on whether this is an option consumers would embrace. It could happen. (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 70)

It sounds ludicrous, but if there is a chance of making money, the larger operators will be ready to test the market's profitability.

Jeffrey talked about this when I first met him in 2011. Since 2009 the number of CSA farms serving the Metropolitan Area almost doubled and 2011 was the first year Jeffrey had not sold all of his shares. Jeffrey said a local farmer who was raising vegetables conventionally for a large local grocery store chain had recently started a CSA. Essentially, Jeffrey said, the shareholders could go to the grocery store and buy the same vegetables just not in a box and, said Jeffrey, probably for less money.

So, we come back to the question, does the idea of community in community supported agriculture have anything left for the farmer? Community is a group and groups are comprised of individuals. So if the farmers are interested in promoting community, they need to get buy-in from the individuals to make a community. That individual buy-in is the weakest link in the chain because the focus in a capitalist society is based on the greatest benefit for the individual, rather than the community.

The Survey Says. Approximately 290 surveys were given to three of the farms for distribution to shareholders. I received 151 return surveys. What was important to today's CSA shareholders? Of the 151 returned surveys, 124 listed supporting a local farmer as one of their reasons for joining their CSA. Fresh, organic produce was a close second with 104 mentions as a reason for joining their CSA.

This result surprised me because so much of the literature had listed fresh, organic produce as the top, and sometimes only, reason for CSA membership. This result, however, indicated shareholders were very cognizant and interested in their community, but it was the idea of community, not necessarily a participatory community. This finding, however, spoke to less of an individualistic approach to CSA membership than I first perceived.

Supporting a local farmer benefits the community in a number of ways. First, there is the economic benefit to the community. The Andersonville Study (Civic Economics, 2004) cited a significant increase in local financial activity with locally-owned businesses. For each \$100 spent with local businesses \$68 stays in the local community while only \$43 remains in the local economy when the same \$100 is spent in a national chain store.

Defenders of the local food movement also emphasize this community aspect because “buying near home fosters a rich and transparent network of relationships between farmers, retailers, and consumers” (Engler, 2012). The financial benefits of local business for the local economy are easy to see and the concern or interest of the CSA members participating in my survey reflected a concern that is more community-oriented than individualistic.

The concern about the local farmer surprised me. Although I could call this an individualistic interest in knowing who was growing the vegetables, there may also have been an interest in sustaining a rural way of life perceived to be disappearing. The shareholder could

support a rural lifestyle that addressed both the nostalgia and pastoralist ideals of what people believe a farm to be, even if the shareholder was not actually interested in living that lifestyle.

So, the idea of supporting a small local farmer points to “community”, but community on a larger scale. This larger view of community allows shareholders to invest in a sort of community vision and reap individual results of good feelings, healthy food and, although most did not admit it, a statement saying, I want this vestige of Americana (the small farmer) to survive. The purchase of a CSA membership is about pesticide-free produce, something real and tangible, but it is also about community.

Several of the returned surveys mentioned that supporting a local farmer is also supporting community by investing in the act of growing food in a sustainable and environmentally sound style. Once again, community is there, but not the idealized, small-scale community that one may have expected. It is bigger and less obvious. According to Trauger Groh, (Groh & McFadden, 2000) one of the founders of Temple-Wilton Community Farm, farmers are one of the most important segments of our community. After all, he said, this [farming] is an essential of existence, not a matter of convenience.” Groh continues,

We have no choice about whether to farm or not, as we have a choice whether to produce TV sets or not. We have to either farm or to support farmers, every one of us at any cost. We can not give it up because it is inconvenient or unprofitable.
(2000, p. xi)

So, I found community, not necessarily in the format I assumed it would be found, but there was community. There was one more angle that I found in my data that surprised me. This was the element of craftsmanship involved, not only from the farmers’ perspective, but also from

the shareholders' perspective. This element of craftsmanship and motivation adds one more link to the idea of community and, in the abstract, citizenship.

Shareholder: Craftsmanship, Motivation, and Community. The elements of the farmers' craftsmanship as defined by Sennett (2008) and motivation or Type I personality traits as defined by Pink (2009) are not unique to the farmers (see *Farmers: A Force For Good*). It took some time for me to realize these same aspects of personality and character are represented in many of the shareholders' attitudes and styles when it comes to cooking and preparing the vegetables they receive from the CSA.

The idea of craftsmanship or making something with one's hands is definitely an element in the process of preparing and cooking vegetables. The social consequences built into how we work with our "human hands" Sennett (2008) argues are "the same capacities that we draw on in social relations" (p, 290). Drawing on pragmatist Hans Joas, Sennett (2008) said craftsmanship connects the organic and the social put in action. Pollan (2013) echoed this idea only Pollan had already drawn the line connecting craftsmanship, or working with one's hands, and cooking.

Cooks get to put their hands on real stuff, not just keyboards and screens, but fundamental things like plants and animals and fungi...How many of us still do the kind of work that engages us in a dialogue with the material world? (Pollan, 2013, p. 5)

This working with our hands and using skills to shape, create, and produce something edible and enjoyable is one of the contributing factors to good citizenship and community building (Sennett, 2008, Pollan, 2013). Sennett (2008) said it is when we learn and understand how to work well that we begin building the foundation for being able to not only govern ourselves, but also to be good citizens. Pollan (2013), on the other hand, identified the

willingness and pleasure in producing something physical as the impetus to move us from a sense of dependence and helplessness into a space of self-sufficiency and pride. This space, I would say, moves us along the path to good citizenship as defined by Sennett (2008).

The intersection between nature and culture for the shareholder is described by Kevin West in a radio interview on National Public Radio about his book *Saving the Season* (2013). In this interview West talked about the craftsmanship involved in transforming nature into culture into community using the example of strawberry jam.

You get some strawberries at the market, and that's nature, that's the raw ingredient, and then you do some stuff with your hands, and then you cook it and it becomes culture right there in front of you. And then you can take that and give it to someone and then it becomes community. And for me that's also part of the story of [my book] "*Saving the Season*" is how nature becomes culture becomes community. (West as quoted in transcript by Naudziunas, 2013)

This enjoyment of craftsmanship was also apparent in shareholder interviews and survey responses. One hundred twenty-nine surveys Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statement "My (our) CSA experience has changed the way I (we) eat." One shareholder said the CSA got them [she and her family] out of "food ruts" because they had to figure out a way to prepare the vegetables they received in the CSA box.

Beth, a Classic Lake shareholder, expressed a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction because her diet was determined by what she received in her weekly CSA box and it was her responsibility to figure out what to do with it. Amanda, a Township Farm shareholder was excited about learning how to prepare vegetables and cook healthy meals for her daughter. Another shareholder in a survey response wrote, "There are items I receive from my CSA that I

typically wouldn't purchase, I love trying new things and researching how to cook with these items.”

Not only did shareholders and farmers share the element of craftsmanship, both farmers and many of the shareholders I interviewed also exhibited many of the Type I or intrinsic motivational characteristics. Farmers displayed these characteristics when it came to farming and shareholders, when it came to cooking. The three elements of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink 2009) are all part of preparing and cooking the vegetables in the CSA box. There is autonomy in deciding when, how, and where to deal with the vegetables. The shareholders' choices were limited by the lifespan of the vegetables, but there was no “management” telling shareholders what to do. For many of them the desire to prepare and use the vegetables, if only to avoid the guilt of not using the vegetables, was motivation enough.

In terms of mastery there was a challenge expressed by more than one shareholder to find new ways to use the vegetables and new recipes. There was the shareholder quoted earlier who said she would not have purchased the vegetables in the CSA box, but she loved trying new things and figuring out what to do with them. Another shareholder wrote, “It has been a challenging (new veggies I had never ever heard of) but extremely rewarding experience. I love it!” A third CSA shareholder expressed her delight with the challenge of finding new recipes this way, “I have learned to use many things that I never would have purchased before (i.e. beets, kohlrabi). My children (ages 3,5,7) will eat veggies from the CSA more often than from the grocery store.”

Purpose, according to Pink (2009) is the most important element in motivation. For CSA shareholders that purpose could be found in a number of different aspects of CSA membership.

It might be to eat more healthily, to teach children about where food comes from, to support a local farmer, or to buy food that has been raised in a sustainable manner. These shareholders expressed a satisfaction with their CSA membership that goes beyond the fresh vegetables all the way to the idea of a mission.

One shareholder wrote, “We were particularly interested in our current CSA because they use the farm as a training farm for new farmers. So we value their ethic in serving the greater community as well.” Another shareholder wrote, “That this is a teaching farm is most important, the mission of the organization, the participants, the social justice aspect. That we receive a wide variety of interesting veg each week is a bonus.”

Another shareholder was delighted because she lost 20 pounds which she credited to her CSA membership. “I lost 20 lbs and maintained that loss due to my CSA which prompted me to eat vegetables I had previously avoided. I like having a surprise package of vegetables which I have to cook.” Another shareholder talked about their commitment to the local farmer, “We believe in supporting local farms - We will continue to do CSA every year we are financially able. CSA improves our nutrition.”

There was also discussion of community in the survey responses. This shareholder’s comment was, perhaps, as close as it comes to the idealized version of community as part of the CSA model. “We share our CSA membership with neighbors and friends. We enjoyed sharing the food, recipes and meals.” This behavior references back to the idea of the ethical enchantment created by the CSA model when “consumers transcend the rationalizing logic of economic exchange by sharing their weekly boxes with other households” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b, p. 287-288). Normally people do not go to the grocery store and buy “extra” food to share with neighbors or friends, but the “extra/excess food in a CSA box often

prompts this kind of sharing behavior that reinforces and creates “community” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b).

Fitting together with the idea of community was also the idea of a mission which, in my study, translated into doing something good for the larger society. The most prominent example was the case of the farmer training program. After attending one of the CSA shareholder events at Classic Lake Farm one shareholder wrote that her reasons for joining her CSA got switched around. “My ideas have changed,” she wrote. “NOW 1) supporting new farmers 2) organic food 3) I go to farmers markets also.” The idea of a mission or doing something for the larger society also included references to doing something good for the environment and contributing to something that would help to make the earth better. Another shareholder expressed it this way, “[I am] Supporting a local farmer who is trying to produce food without destroying/polluting our ground water and mother earth.”

Another recurring offshoot of a CSA membership was the idea that the CSA vegetables and the CSA experience in general (especially with on-farm pickup) was an important part of good parenting. Several parents wrote comments about how they believed it was good for their children to have an idea of where their food comes from and the on-farm pickup made that possible. Lynn, one of the shareholders from Township Farm, said that her children did not like to try new foods, but because they saw the food come from the farm they were more willing to give some of those new foods a try. Another shareholder wrote about the experience being good for her family not only because she got to try new foods and share recipe ideas, but also because “My kids will remember this and I feel good providing my family with local organic produce.” This shareholder went on to say that she had learned a lot from her farmer and now had her own garden.

Although none of these examples reference “purpose” per se, the ideas and attitudes expressed exemplify a sentiment that goes beyond a box of fresh vegetables. This sentiment goes beyond “self” and out toward families and the community at large. The intrinsic motivation for shareholders is reflected not only in the act of purchasing CSA vegetables, but also in what the shareholders believe their CSA purchase is doing for the farmer, their families, and their communities.

Happy Money. Elizabeth Dunn and Michael Norton (2013) have five principles of what they call “happy money.” These principles are ways to look at how people spend their money in order to bring about the greatest amount of happiness. “Remember,” Dunn and Norton wrote, “the goal is to wring the most happiness out of every \$5: the more principles [of the five principles] used, the more happiness” (2013, p. 135). For an intrinsically motivated individual one can easily identify four of Dunn and Norton’s (2013) five principles in the purchase of a CSA share.

Happy Money Principle #1 - Buy Experiences. Dunn and Norton suggest buying experiences rather than material things to get the most happiness out of money. Experiential purchases, according to Dunn and Norton (2013), say more about who we are than material purchases. For a CSA shareholder, especially with on farm pickup, every weekly vegetable delivery (or pick up) can be an experience. This is especially true if the shareholder has an opportunity to talk to other shareholders and the farmers, even if it might be a “little annoying” on a Friday afternoon. Each week’s box of vegetables can be an experience of new recipes, new vegetables, and new challenges.

Happy Money Principle #2 – Make it a Treat. “Knowing that something won’t last forever can make us appreciate it more” (Dunn & Norton, 2013, p. 36). The fresh vegetables and

weekly deliveries from the CSA last just so long and then it is over. The time available to enjoy those summer vegetables is limited by the Midwestern winters. Even though some of the larger CSA farmers offer fall and winter shares with root vegetables and/or frozen vegetables, these shares are not like the first red tomatoes or green beans of the summer.

Daniel Dimmel, the shareholder who owned the coffee shop and was a drop site for Classic Lake Farm said he wished he could do something to make the CSA season last longer. But, how much appreciation do people have of things that are available any time? Most often, Dunn and Norton (2013) said, “When a pleasurable activity is always available, we may never get around to doing it, thereby missing out on a relatively inexpensive source of happiness” (p. 37). The limited timeframe of the CSA season makes the summertime vegetables a treat and treats, according to Dunn and Norton (2013), can increase happiness.

Happy Money Principle #4 – Pay Now, Consume Later. We get just as much, if not more pleasure from anticipating things in the future (Dunn & Norton, 2013). For CSA shareholders that anticipation begins long before the vegetables show up on the table. The “pain” of payment usually happens in the late winter or early spring. Once that is over the only thing left is anticipation.

This anticipation is sweet because the future has not happened yet and shareholders can “fill in the details as we would like them to be” (Dunn & Norton, 2013, p. 84). Dunn and Norton compared looking toward the future to being astronauts and looking at the earth from space. We know what is there, but the details are a little fuzzy. The shareholders know the vegetables are coming, but they are not yet faced with the extra eggplant still sitting on the counter or the peas that should have been eaten yesterday in the refrigerator.

But it is not only anticipating the beginning of the CSA season that brings happiness. Betty, from Neighborhood Farm said she liked it when the farmer pointed to something that was still in the field and said, “That is what you will be getting next week.” The CSA newsletters and farm blogs also gave shareholders an idea about what was happening on the farm and what delights they could anticipate receiving in their boxes with the next delivery or pickup.

There is one more advantage to the Pay Now, Consume Later principle. According to Dunn and Norton (2013) purchases for which the “pain” of payment is in the past can make the purchaser feel as if the purchase is free and thus liberate people to “spend their time in happier ways” (Dunn & Norton, 2013, p. 101). In addition, happiness can increase because there is freedom from “the tyranny of sunk costs” (Dunn & Norton, 2013, p. 101). The purchase has been made and all that is left to do is to enjoy the vegetables. One of the written comments from the survey illustrates this kind of pleasure. “Because I don't know what will be in the box it's like getting a special present to open it up and find what's inside - ooooooh, cherry tomatoes!”

Happy Money Principle #5 – Invest in Others. Spending money on others can increase your happiness more than spending that same money on yourself (Dunn & Norton, 2013). That explains how excited the farmer interviewed by Michael Moss (2014) was about providing high quality food at a lower price, especially to people receiving food stamps. Remember the farmers in my study talking about providing living wage jobs? Remember the farmer at the CSA Conference who said the biggest challenge of CSA farmers was being too busy in the summertime to spend time with their own families? That same farmer turned around and said the biggest benefit of being a CSA farmer was having the *opportunity* to provide their customers with healthy food and fresh vegetables. He called it an “*opportunity*,” These farmers were investing in others and they were excited about what they were doing.

The CSA shareholder has the same opportunity to invest in others, only the “others” in which they are investing is the farmers. When the shareholder pays ahead for the CSA share they are investing their money in a farm, a farmer, a community, and the environment. Maggie, a shareholder from Township Farm, said her CSA share was expensive but it made her feel so good she thought of it as a charitable donation. Kaari from Classic Lake Farm did not think she got enough vegetables, but she liked the farm and the farmer training program so much she said she would remain a CSA member as long as she could afford it. There was also the comment from one of the written surveys from a Classic Lake Farm shareholder saying it was the mission of the organization that was important. The vegetables were just “a bonus.”

Happy Money Principle #3 – Buy Time. This principle is out of order, but that is on purpose because this principle, although applicable to CSA shareholders, will be addressed in Chapter Five when talking about the concept of buying time. In any case even without counting principle #3, four of Dunn and Norton’s (2013) five principles of “happy money” apply directly to a CSA share purchase. There is a lot more to the purchase of a CSA share than the vegetables.

Earlier in this section talking about the shareholder’s experience of community, I raised the idea that when an investor or shareholder is actually sharing the risk, it normally means if the risk pays off the investor or shareholder gets more back than they actually put in. Perhaps, the data show that the investor or shareholder is actually getting more back than they put in. The payback, however, may not be in dollars or vegetables. The payback may be in an experience of community that allows individuals to give something, create or cook something, and/or contribute something to an idea or mission and maybe that is what makes the shareholder investment, in some cases, worth more than money. The CSA shareholder/farmer relationship is a symbiotic relationship but it is less focused on vegetables than one may realize at first glance.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four included the reporting of my findings. The chapter began with a discussion of the idea of community in community supported agriculture. After the discussion about community, I presented the three themes that emerged from the data. These themes included 1) Farmers: A Force for Good; 2) Lopsided Loyalty: Farmer vs. Shareholder; 3) CSA: Community...Really? My first theme, Farmers: A Force for Good also included four elements. These elements were 1) Farming as Craftsmanship; 2) Motivation, Meaning and Purpose; 3) Caring for the Soil and Environment, 4) Transfer of Knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter I apply the theory developed by Ferdinand Tönnies, Jean Baudrillard, and Dawn Melea Press and Eric Arnould to help describe my findings. These theorists come from different centuries and different countries and are not often associated together. Yet, when you apply their theories to community supported agriculture the theories dovetail beautifully to help suggest possible explanations for the development and potential trajectory of community supported agriculture.

Before applying their theories, I first provide a brief history of farming and the development of the food industry. The primary farming focus will be on the last 80 years since the introduction of refrigeration upended many of the assumptions and operations of the farming industry and the consumer perception of “fresh” food. The community supported agriculture role has, in some ways, redefined consumer perception of “fresh” food since its beginning in 1986.

Food Production

For most western societies farming is not optional. With the exception of some Native American cultures, well into the eighteenth century farming was a necessity for survival more than an economic enterprise (Groh & McFadden, 2000). Nearly everyone raised food to feed themselves. As the population in the U.S. grew and new technologies were introduced, the rural population began moving into towns and cities for employment. This move to urban areas included a change in the general lifestyle of the U.S.

This population shift to urban areas transformed farming from a position of self-support and survival, to a profit center. Once the profit motive became the dominant energy behind farming activities, the search for efficiency and higher production rates became a standard part of

the industry (Groh & McFadden, 2000). Two pivotal things facilitated this transition. The first was the introduction (and delayed) acceptance of refrigeration and the second was the launch of processed foods by corporate food companies after the end of World War II.

Refrigeration: What happened. Refrigeration changed the landscape forever as far as local food and the definition of freshness was concerned (Friedberg, 2009). No longer was the local farmer the only source for fresh food nor were households restricted to what could be grown and stored locally. Because of refrigerated transport, the entire country could enjoy Florida orange juice. Lettuce from California was eaten year round in New England. Bananas from South America became a diet staple and the most consumed fruit in the country (Friedberg, 2009). Refrigeration, though slow to catch on, changed everything about food and completely redefined the idea of fresh food.

Suzanne Friedberg in her book, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (2009) tracks the introduction of cold storage from the sixteenth century as pack animals transported ice between the Alps and the Mediterranean to the icebox industry of the early twentieth century in the U.S. and the adoption of electric refrigerators and refrigerated transport in the 1920s. Refrigeration “redefined the geography of food” (p. 47) and changed the way consumers thought about freshness. No longer did the consumer define freshness as “just-picked” or “just-killed.” Now the consumer simply expected to be able to keep the produce, fruit, eggs, or meat in the refrigerator to retain the food’s freshness.

This expectation, however, did not definitively characterize what was meant by the word “fresh.” Most marketers are still eager to put on the word “fresh” on their labels. The allure of this word, according to Friedberg (2009), is in the “anxieties and dilemmas borne of industrial capitalism and the culture of mass consumption” (p. 3). Friedberg (2009) said even though we

strive to connect with nature and community, we are too busy to actually spend time with either. As a result, our culture does not provide us with much that feels authentic or healthy (Friedberg, 2009). Hence, the idea of fresh food satisfies what Friedberg (2009) called our modern appetites.

Corporate proxies. Refrigeration and the idea of “fresh” have not been the only change agents in society and the food industry. Another development is society’s willingness to give “proxies to corporations” to produce and provide most of our food, clothing, and shelter (Berry, 2002, p. 250). Berry (2002) said society is basically outsourcing responsibility for services, such as child care, education, and care of the sick and elderly. These services, previously informally provided by the family or community, are now outsourced to profit-making corporations.

Our willingness to outsource these intimate family-type services makes outsourcing the production and preparation of the food we eat seem natural. This outsourcing, however, distances us from everything that happens to our food on its way from the farm to the grocery store or restaurant (Berry, 2002). As fewer and fewer consumers grow up and experience farm life, fewer people in society recognize the labor and effort required to get food from the farm to the grocery store (Friedberg, 2009).

The food industry continues to “trim, slice, and package all kinds of refrigerated foods” (Friedberg, 2009, p. 7) and call that food “fresh.” As the industry “adds value” to these foods, Friedberg (2009) said they are also stripping away the labor and the mess. There is still labor involved in every step of the process, it has simply become labor that the consumer does not see or appreciate.

Because of the extensive use of petrochemicals and genetic manipulation “the basic character of our food is altered. Fruit, vegetables, grains and meat become nutritionally equivalent ‘food products’” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 68). Community supported

agriculture, according to McFadden, is a “parallel food system to the industrial status quo” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 70). This parallel system offers society an alternative way to connect with the land and the idea of community. But this parallel system comes with its own hazards and concerns over the commercialization possibilities surrounding community supported agriculture itself.

A danger for CSA...is the possibility of this widespread, soul-felt yearning for a connection with the earth and the community being exploited to the extent that CSA is perverted, becoming more and more a marketing exercise, and less of an authentic community enterprise. (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 70)

It is not easy to maintain a community enterprise. The split of one of the original CSA farms was described as “a rather grisly process” (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xv) by Robyn Van En, one of the original founders. But, Van En said she learned a lot about “group dynamics, about CSA’s pitfalls and potential, and about the larger community, both locally and regionally” (2007, p. xv). Community is possible in community supported agriculture, but sometimes the idea of community may take on a different face.

Ferdinand Tönnies – Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) is most well-known for his contribution to the study of sociology with his theory of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, frequently translated as Community and Society. Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are social groupings at opposite ends of the spectrum. These social groupings do not exist as such in reality, but are used by sociologists in describing the evolution of societies.

Gemeinschaft is a social grouping that Tönnies defined as family-like. Members of this group focus on working together to sustain the group or Gemeinschaft, operating by what

Tönnies (1955) called “natural will.” With “natural will” it is the predisposition of group members to make decisions supporting or sustaining the group without considering alternatives. The most important element in the way group members live their lives is the continuation of the group.

The farm family of the early eighteenth century is the quintessential example of Tönnies’s *Gemeinschaft*. The family, as a social unit, worked together for their survival, with each individual doing their duty without regard to other “possibilities.” As time went on, families grouped together in small communities thus perpetuating and enlarging the *Gemeinschaft*. As the *Gemeinschaft* grows, however, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain (Tönnies, 1955). The eventual introduction of something new or different is likely to bring about a defection from one or more members of the *Gemeinschaft*. Even though the *Gemeinschaft* is built on the idea of equality, the disruption of this perception of equality presents the biggest threat to the *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies, 1955). There is constant pressure from economic, political, and youthful energies that introduce individualistic ideas and tendencies into the *Gemeinschaft* thus disrupting the perception of equality (Tönnies, 1955).

Gesellschaft, at the other end of the spectrum, is a social group Tönnies (1955) defined as an artificial grouping of individuals such as a large corporation with a common goal. The members of the group stay together; not to sustain the corporation but to further the goals of each individual of the corporation. The members of this group operate by what Tönnies (1955) called “rational will.” That is, each decision and choice is thought out and evaluated by each individual based on the individual’s own best interests.

In a pure *Gemeinschaft* economic transactions are not a factor. If a member of the *Gemeinschaft* needs something, it is obtained from within the *Gemeinschaft* via trade or barter

(Tönnies, 1955). Sustenance, not profit, is the primary factor in *Gemeinschaft* transactions. The natural will Tönnies identified is akin to intrinsic motivation. Frequently the actors are not aware of the motivation behind their actions because the existence and survival of the *Gemeinschaft* is the motivation in and of itself. Tönnies went one step further calling this motivation more of a “realization of moral obligation, moral imperative or prohibition” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 9). Natural will means the actions of the individuals in the *Gemeinschaft* occur without thought or ulterior motive.

In a pure *Gesellschaft* economic transactions are frequently the basis for the entire relationship (Tönnies, 1955). The *Gesellschaft* is temporary and lasts only as long as the actors creating the *Gesellschaft* benefit from its existence. The example of a joint stock company operating as if it is an individual would be an example of *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1955). This social grouping is both temporary and artificial. We live in a world that is a combination of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and the progression from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is a natural and predictable process (Tönnies, 1955).

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a migration of individuals from the farms and rural areas to the city. With this migration instead of being self-supporting, farmers began selling their produce to grocers to support the life in the city. Because “fresh” food and leftovers could not be safely stored, daily visits to the grocer were normal fare for city residents. Consequently, knowing the farmer who raised the vegetables, chickens, eggs, pork, or beef for the grocer was the rule rather than the exception.

The move from self-sustaining farms to farms that sold their produce to sustain life in the city created a new and different type of *Gemeinschaft*. The introduction of economic exchange colored the *Gemeinschaft* and introduced the first suggestion of *Gesellschaft*. The participants in

this “community” of farmers, grocers and city dwellers knew and relied on each other for survival. The grocer expected daily deliveries from the farmer. The city dwellers expected fresh food to be available from the grocer and the farmers expected a reliable market for their vegetables, eggs, dairy, and meat. Over time and with repetition another *Gemeinschaft* developed.

A purely *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft* society does not (and can not) exist. Societies are combinations of social groupings that represent different facets of *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*, depending on the relationships involved. The natural trajectory, however, of a society as it grows is toward the *Gesellschaft*. The introduction of refrigeration and processed foods represented two of the most dramatic moves that occurred in the twentieth century moving food production toward *Gesellschaft*.

The Changing Ideas of “Fresh”. With the introduction of refrigeration the idea of what was considered fresh food changed. No longer did the produce need to be “just-picked” or the eggs “just-laid.” Now even food that was several days old, with refrigeration could retain the idea of freshness (Friedberg, 2009). The daily deliveries from farmers were no longer a required part of a grocer’s business. Gradually, middlemen came into the picture. The presence of middlemen in getting food to the consumer, created what Picardy (2001) called social distance not only between the farmer and the grocer, but even more importantly between the farmer and the consumer. This social distance discouraged community and increased economic anonymity. With widespread adaptation of refrigeration, social distance increased and the farmer became less and less visible to the consumer.

Invasion of Corporate Food. The introduction of processed foods occurred after the end of World War II. Corporations developed food that was easily shipped, stored, and consumed on

the battlefield and these corporations needed markets for these canned, freeze-dried, powered, instant, and super-convenient processed food products back in the U.S. There was profit to be found in the kitchen and corporate food interests were ready to move into the kitchen even before women began to move out (Pollan, 2013).

Food industry advertising was a primary mover in promoting these processed foods to busy families (Pollan, 2013). Pollan (2013) said advertising created the idea that convenient food was the only kind of food for which there was time.

The ads have also helped manufacture a sense of panic about time, depicting families so rushed and harried in the morning that there is no time to make breakfast, not even to pour some milk over a bowl of cereal. No, the only hope is to munch on a cereal bar...in the bus or car. (Pollan, 2013, p. 187)

“Processing food” says Pollan, “is extremely profitable – much more so than growing it or selling it whole” (2013, p. 185). Processed food, though profitable, dispenses with the farmer/consumer relationship.

It was at this point that the social distance (Picardy, 2001) between consumer and farmer became a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. The *Gesellschaft* replaced the *Gemeinschaft*. Advertising campaigns by food corporations changed societal expectations and buying habits. Consumers no longer expected to buy food from the farmer. It took time, but with a new definition of “fresh” food, eating locally grown food became an oddity rather than a necessity. The convenience and popularity of processed food became ubiquitous and the farmer was an even less important link in the food chain in the minds of urban consumers.

To survive in this *Gesellschaft* farms had to change. With the disintegration of the *Gemeinschaft* and the ascendancy of the *Gesellschaft*, “The motive to earn money through

farming, to make a profit...took its place beside the traditional values of farming, and steadily became more and more domineering” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 12). The introduction of the profit motive in farming facilitated the rising consciousness of the transactional and economic perspectives of the *Gesellschaft*. As predicted by Tönnies (1955), society gradually transformed as more of the population began participating in the *Gesellschaft* and accepting the ideas of the *Gesellschaft* as part of the dominant culture. “The consciousness of the *Gesellschaft*,” said Tönnies, “gradually becomes the consciousness of an increasing mass of the people” (1955, p. 29).

So in the mid-twentieth century the influence of the *Gesellschaft* increased and the consumers’ awareness of farms and farmers decreased. In 1937 there were seven million farms, less than 60 years later only 2.2 million farms remained and less than two percent of the population lived on farms (Henderson & Van En, 2007). For the remaining farmers, instead of selling their food directly to consumers, they sold their produce on the commodities market. The *Gesellschaft* grew and farms turned into monocultures. Instead of growing and rotating multiple crops, farmers began specializing in one or two crops and disposing of the entire harvest in one place. *Gesellschaft* was in its ascendancy and the farmer/consumer connection was disappearing. Instead of selling food to consumers, farmers sold commodity crops to middlemen and the middlemen sold those same crops to corporate food interests for processing.

Recreating the Connection. In 1986 two separate farms took steps to revolutionize this *Gesellschaft* and reestablish the relationship between farmer and consumer. Instead of living with economic anonymity, these two farms (Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire and Indian Hills Farm in Massachusetts) decided to use their farms to create community and to get to know and appreciate their neighbors. The term community supported

agriculture was born in 1986 as Robyn Van En from Indian Hills Farm worked to change her farming situation from a circumstance where she as the farmer “carried all the capitalization expenses, all of the work, and all of the risk” (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiii) to a situation where the beneficiaries of her work shared in the work and expenses as well as the harvest.

In very substantial ways, the establishment of community supported agriculture in the mid 1980s was a rebirth of *Gemeinschaft* in farming in general. The CSA model has evolved over the years. Both of the original CSAs were based on the community farm model meaning that the shareholders received all of the food produced on the farm. Originally both farms also required shareholders to participate with farming activities working toward the establishment of a “new” *Gemeinschaft* or community. Van En's description of her vision for a better approach to farming could double as a description of *Gemeinschaft* and community.

Something cooperative, an arrangement that would allow people to draw upon their combined abilities, expertise, and resources for the mutual benefit of all involved. It would also bring the people producing the food closer to the people who were eating the food and the eaters closer to the land. (Henderson & Van En, 2007, p. xiv)

As CSAs spread across the U.S. the model in which all the food raised on the farm is divided between the shareholders has not been widely adopted. Only one farm out of five in my study relied solely on the CSA revenue stream. With smaller numbers of shareholders, the farms in my study needed produce leaving the farm more frequently than was possible with their existing CSA distributions. None of the farms in my study required shareholders to work on the farm, but some did offer reduced cost shares in exchange for labor. Most of the farms in my

study were subscription CSAs where the shareholder simply received a box of vegetables every week, the only requirement was payment.

Subscription CSA farms are more numerous and threaten to morph the CSA *Gemeinschaft* into a more *Gesellschaft*-type contractual transaction. However, at this point some of the skeptics have admitted that even the subscription model, although it moves away from the community aspect, has made an important contribution to the viability and survival of farms (Henderson & Van En, 2007).

The family farm especially arouses “certain emotional, moral, and social qualities” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 19). According to Groh (Groh & McFadden, 2000), that is why so many politicians promise to save the family farm. Those farm ideals, however, are based on a large families, sometimes as many as three generations, working together to run the farm (Groh & McFadden, 2000). This *Gemeinschaft* and these types of families running a farm rarely exist now.

Nonetheless CSAs today are reviving the small farm concept and small CSAs are feeding thousands of families. The five small farms in my study were feeding and connecting with more than 350 families. Features of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are apparent to a greater or lesser extent with all five of the farms. Three of the farms with which I worked, Neighborhood Farm, Urban Farm and Fresh Face Farm, were less than two years old. Their development of *Gemeinschaft* and/or community was still in its early stages. The desire to create community on the part of the farmers was there. In many ways what the farmers were looking for in terms of community sounded more like a *Gemeinschaft* community than a *Gesellschaft* community. In other words, the farmers’ expression of community was frequently not about money.

From the farmer's perspective. Rick from Neighborhood Farm was really hoping to develop community. Since this was the first year after consolidation he knew it would take time to build community and he said, "I know I will need to be pragmatic in these first few years" but he hoped to have a farm where "the word community in CSA does not get sort of left out." What that meant to Rick was building a rapport with shareholders where "it's not always about us pleasing them as much as, yeah, a relationship, you know?" Rick wanted the shareholders to "have a feeling of comfort and confidence and respect in the CSA that they can say, 'Hey, I didn't really like that variety of carrots, you should grow something else.'"

Erik from Classic Lake Farm expressed more of a *Gesellschaft* frame of mind. Not that he was focused on the "what's in it for me" aspect of *Gesellschaft*. But he expressed the insecurity and anxiety that comes with the temporariness of *Gesellschaft* relationships. As I mentioned earlier, he was wondering if the farm could live up to the expectations of the shareholders. Erik said when he was packing the box or writing the newsletter his mind would wander and he would be concerned about living up to the expectations Martha Stewart's endorsement of CSAs might have inspired in the minds of his shareholders.

The ideal *Gemeinschaft* community described by Rick includes community members who provide feedback and almost a participatory approach to the farm. The *Gesellschaft* image expressed by Erik presents more critical and less tolerant expectations. The biggest difference between the two pictures is the trust expressed by the *Gemeinschaft* and the uncertainty expressed in the *Gesellschaft*. Even though Erik received email kudos for the vegetables and produce in the CSA boxes that season, there was still a question in his mind about the reliability of the community.

Erik's insecurity was understandable. The farm's shareholder turnover from the 2011 to 2012 season was just a little less than fifty percent. Erik's concluded that the farm was not meeting the expectations of those shareholders. However, one cannot assume that everyone dropped because they were disappointed with the vegetables they received. People move, finances may be an issue for some, sometimes the constant supply of vegetables may be more than a family can eat. Regardless of why the former shareholders did not consider it to be in their best interests to return the next year, this unpredictable feature of *Gesellschaft* makes the situation difficult for the farmer.

Tönnies (1955) said that memory creates gratitude and faithfulness and, in the end, *Gemeinschaft*. According to Tönnies the "specific truth of such relationships must manifest itself in mutual trust and belief" (1955, p. 50). The *Gemeinschaft* relationships become harder to maintain as the trust and belief become less spontaneous for the individuals involved. That is why it is incumbent on all participants in the *Gemeinschaft* to be cognizant and respectful of all other members of the *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies, 1955).

Jeffrey used his blog and newsletter to remind shareholders that what they were buying was *Gemeinschaft* -- even though he did not use that word. He emphasized the personal aspect of the work, time, and effort that went into raising the vegetables for the shareholders, driving home the idea of *Gemeinschaft* and the "moral imperative" Tönnies (1955) talked about. Following is a post from Jeffrey's blog during the 2012 CSA season talking about the work and soul that goes into the vegetables raised for friends, neighbors, and family.

We work hard to provide the best, most nutritious and delicious food we can provide to you. It is hard work. It is dirty work. Some days the work goes into the evening...We put a lot of our heart and soul into your produce...Because our

farm is a Community Supported Agriculture farm we have gotten to know many of our members through on-farm pickups or on-farm events. Growing the food we grow becomes more personal; we grow for our friends and neighbors and family.

From the Shareholder's Perspective. Tönnies (1955) said as *Gesellschaft* becomes part of the social fabric and “at least in tendency, the whole people acquire the characteristics of the *Gesellschaft*” (p. 264) the presence and influence of the *Gesellschaft* will impact more and more behaviors. The presence of *Gesellschaft* was apparent in some of the shareholder responses when I asked what the shareholder would do if their farmer chose to sell the farm’s produce to a middleman for distribution. One shareholder said “it would depend on how convenient it was for me...like if it was on my commute.” Another shareholder said it would depend primarily on the cost. She assumed the cost would be higher, so she would probably discontinue with the farm.

In this case, both shareholders’ concerns were centered on the convenience and price factors and were not related in any way to the idea of community or the viability of the farm. These are *Gesellschaft* concerns which Tönnies (1955) described as a situation in which “nobody wants to grant and produce anything for another individual...if it be not in exchange for a gift or labor equivalent that he considers at least equal to what he has given” (p. 74). For these shareholders, the convenience or price would trump the relationship with the farm and the farmer.

When I asked another shareholder the same question, she paused and then said, “Oh, I don’t know. I would be really disappointed if someone else was in the middle. We’ve been with Jeffrey since his first season as a CSA. I am not sure I

would leave because I would still be supporting his farm. But I am not sure...I would think pretty seriously about it.

This is *Gemeinschaft*, an example of what Tönnies (1955) called an application of natural will. When presented with this hypothetical situation, the shareholder's relationship with her farmer and the farm is so important to her she was at least willing to consider staying with the farm.

Despite her preference to deal directly with the farmer, the shareholder would consider staying with the CSA because she would still be "supporting the farm." For this shareholder, the importance of her relationship with the farmer made this connection part of the *Gemeinschaft*. Tönnies described the *Gemeinschaft* relationship as an understanding of *Gemeinschaft* members based on "direct interest of one being in the life of the other, and readiness to take part in his joy and sorrow" (Tönnies, 1955, p. 54).

Daniel, a Classic Lake Farm shareholder, said he wanted to be able to tie a face to the person with whom he was doing business and he liked knowing he was talking to the person who made the decisions. At first, because I knew this shareholder was also a small business owner, this sounded like a *Gesellschaft* type response. But Daniel continued:

That is the beauty of CSA. It is the opportunity to connect to their life and stories and you are part of it. You know you count. I think I would lose that [if the farmer sold his produce to a middleman]. I feel like I am willing to be a supporter. I want to have a personal connection.

What started out sounding like a *Gesellschaft* response turned into *Gemeinschaft*. Tönnies (1955) said it is possible for business relationships to turn into *Gemeinschaft* in situations with long term repeated interactions. Again, we come back to the idea that memory creates gratitude and faithfulness which are the basis for *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies, 1955). The importance of

memory and relationship explains why Tönnies (1955) said *Gemeinschaft* is based in the past while *Gesellschaft*, concerned with profit and money, is future-oriented.

CSA Today: Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. In 1922 as an addendum to his 1877 book, *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft*, Tönnies added a paragraph to his *Gesellschaft* thesis (Tönnies, 1955). In this paragraph Tönnies bemoans the “terrible disruption which the capitalistic system of *Gesellschaft* has undergone” (1955, p. 228). At the same time, he said *Gesellschaft* has also been destructively working its own “magic” in society. The cry for *Gemeinschaft* had become more vocal and Tönnies said the saving grace would be “found in the idea of cooperative production, if and when it is able to protect itself against relapsing into mere business” (1955, p. 228). Maybe Tönnies was talking about the future community supported agriculture model.

CSA farms are combinations of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. By selling vegetables directly to the shareholders CSA farms maintain a direct-to-consumer relationship. These relationships, especially the long term relationships, are the basis for *Gemeinschaft*. Business can create *Gemeinschaft*, according to Tönnies, through repetition of the “exchange act” (1955, p. 20) and also by creating a relationship that lengthens the individual act “by the postponement of fulfillment on the part of one or both sides” (1955, p. 20). The reason this creates *Gemeinschaft* is because “there results a relationship, the distinguishing characteristic of which is a one-sided or mutual ‘promise’” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 20).

The shareholder makes a payment, or if you will, a loan to the farmer with the farmers’ promise to deliver vegetables to the best of their ability during the coming growing season. It is this understanding or promise that creates a sense of duty upon the farmer (Tönnies, 1955). “These latter types of natural will [desire and inclination, love or habit, or reason or intellect contained in the feeling of duty] change into one another, and each can be the basis of

Gemeinschaft” (Tönnies, 1955, p. 20). Since this fulfillment is based on the farmer’s sense of duty and the shareholder’s sense of trust, the Gemeinschaft relationship could be described as existing in the past. The participants are basing their trust on the relationship(s) as it has existed previously.

On the other hand, the farmers’ financial needs and the lack of a reliable customer base (on average 50% annual turnover) create a Gesellschaft environment. “Business” said Tönnies “rests primarily on hope, secondarily on calculation and a combination of probabilities” (1955, p. 104). All of these things, hope, calculation and probability are future-oriented and hence Gesellschaft. In essence the farmer is working within the Gesellschaft to create Gemeinschaft for shareholders. But, this in itself is a contradiction in terms. Tönnies said, “Whereas, it is possible for a type of Gemeinschaft to exist among business partners, one could indeed hardly speak of a commercial Gemeinschaft (community)” (1955, p. 38). Community supported agriculture is an interesting blend of social authenticity with a foot in both worlds.

Neither Gemeinschaft nor Gesellschaft are concrete realities. Reality is always a combination of the two concepts (Varco, 2008). However, Kivisto (2004) said although one could conclude from Tönnies’s writing that both Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft exist simultaneously, Tönnies seemed to indicate that society would evolve from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. So what starts out as Gemeinschaft evolves to Gesellschaft because of economics, politics, and scientific change (Kivisto, 1994).

The community supported agriculture idea does not have a “tightly crafted definition” by design (Henderson & Van En, 2007) and that has allowed the CSA label to be used in numerous situations that in many ways may threaten the current CSA business model. The middleman who contacted Erik at Classic Lake Farm was offering to package and distribute vegetables from

multiple farms in a box and call it a CSA. It just did not seem right to Erik because the middleman was taking all the money and incurring no risk. If one farmer did not have the vegetables the middleman was looking for, the middleman would just go to the next farmer. Erik said, “I wrote him a long letter [saying] that I appreciated what he was trying to do, but I don’t know if he got it off the ground or not.”

Out in California, Loughridge (2002) gave the example of Green Earth Organics and Front Door Organics. Both businesses sold season long “memberships” and shares on a week-by-week basis. The CSA was not owned by a farmer, but was operated by an entrepreneur who purchased vegetables from vegetable brokers and farmers. All transactions took place on the internet and the order was delivered directly to the customer’s front door. The only thing needed was a credit card.

Some local CSA farms not in my study sold coupons that allowed shareholders to come to the farmers market and pick up their own choice of vegetables each week. One of the farmers presenting at the CSA Conference I attended had a Market Share program in which the member received a punch card – three cards per each ten-week session. The member was required to “spend” the entire amount at the farm stand on their choice of vegetables within the ten-week session. If the punch card was not fully spent after ten weeks, the balance was donated to Fair Share, a local pool of money used to purchase CSA shares for low income households.

The *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* progression is seen in these examples. Each of the minor modifications gradually reduces the importance of the farmer/shareholder relationship and, in some cases, eliminates the farmer/shareholder relationship entirely. In a CSA research study by Kenneth Loughridge (2002), shareholders in what he called less business-oriented CSAs were more satisfied when compared to shareholders from the more business-oriented

CSAs. Loughridge did not venture any explanation as to why this might be, but one might venture a guess that the less business-oriented CSAs created more of a *Gemeinschaft* environment for shareholders.

Agriculture has followed this *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* progression, with community supported agriculture momentarily “rescuing” agriculture and food from its spiral into the anonymity of *Gesellschaft*. However, this seeming detour into a type of *Gemeinschaft* with community supported agriculture is, at the same time, also being undermined and destabilized by the progression of *Gesellschaft*. And the progression is speeding up.

All of the factors that are part of the *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* movement are present. In addition the changes in communication and technology amplify the impact of economics, politics, and scientific change threatening the *Gemeinschaft*. These dynamics are actively chipping away at this momentary detour back into a type of *Gemeinschaft* and intensifying the resurgence of the *Gesellschaft*.

This “speeding up” and amplification is a hallmark of Jean Baudrillard’s social theory. Baudrillard’s application of simulation and hyper-reality to what is happening in society is also reflected in the development and expansion of community supported agriculture. To apply these ideas to CSAs, I step back to the early days of agriculture to describe how these theories come alive in this seeming anomaly.

Jean Baudrillard – Signs, Simulation, and Hyper-reality

Just as community supported agriculture appears to be a step back into *Gemeinschaft* from the *Gesellschaft* progression of society, so the position of community supported agriculture is a step back in the simulation away from the hyper-reality that Jean Baudrillard described in his social theory. Community supported agriculture, in a way “arrests” what Baudrillard called the

degradation of society (Baudrillard, 1998) as it speeds toward the complete obliteration and replacement of reality with hyper-reality.

In Chapter Two I described Baudrillard's definitions and some preliminary applications of Baudrillardian theory. At this point I apply some of his theory to community supported agriculture with my data. Although I see some of Baudrillard's theory playing out with the CSA concept, most application of the CSA experience appears to contradict or at least slow down the progression of the simulation described in Baudrillard's theory.

Sign-Value. We are not dealing with anything real or any type of commodity according to Baudrillard (1998). Instead we are consuming what the commodities represent in terms of messages and images (Baudrillard, 1998). These messages and images are what Baudrillard called "the code" that each of us as consumers, consciously and/or unconsciously, understand and know how to interpret (Baudrillard, 1998). Because we "know" this code Baudrillard said we are able to interpret what the consumption of one commodity or type of commodity represents and how that act of consumption interacts with the rest of the code. In most cases our place in society in terms of class defines how we interpret and react to the code (Baudrillard, 1998). As a result of the competitive value of the code and the social training individuals receive, "consumption" becomes the substitute for all ideologies (Baudrillard, 1998).

Consumption trumps everything.

One of the examples Baudrillard (1998) used to explain his theory of consumption was the purchase of high-end hotel stays. Baudrillard said these high-end hotels are designed not for the wealthy consumer but for consumers hoping to become or wishing they were wealthy. These "hopeful" consumers stay in high-end hotels because of what the high-end hotel stay represents

in terms of their own fantasies and because of what friends and acquaintances will think (Baudrillard, 1998).

The messages and images making up the code come into play when a need or desire presents itself and we choose how that need or desire will be filled. Instead of looking at the actual use-value of an item (e.g. a hotel stay), the messages and images become the basis for choosing how the need or desire will be filled. Baudrillard explained it this way, “Outside the field of its objective function, where it is irreplaceable...the object becomes substitutable in a more or less unlimited way within the field of connotations, where it assumes sign-value” (1998, p. 76).

Another example Baudrillard used in his book, *The Consumer Society* (1998) is the washing machine (remember this book was originally written in 1970). The washing machine has an objective function as an appliance, but the sign-value of the washing machine is a representation of prestige and comfort. What we actually consume when we choose a washing machine is the sign-value of the type or brand of washing machine and what that “brand” says will be based on our interpretation of “the code” (Baudrillard, 1998).

In his Introduction to *The Consumer Society* (1998), George Ritzer said in Baudrillard’s theory if the purpose of consumption were only to meet needs, all needs could conceivably be satisfied. Instead of needs, however, Baudrillard’s interpretation of the code is set up so consumers are constantly searching for differentiation and there are countless ways for difference to be represented within the code. Since the consumer is never satisfied in this search for differentiation, the act of consumption replaces all other ideologies (Baudrillard, 1998). Ritzer described it this way.

And this, in turn, is one of the reasons for Baudrillard's dissatisfaction with the use of the concept of 'needs' - needs can, by definition, be satisfied and therefore cannot account for the insatiability of consumers. What people seek in consumption is not so much a particular object as difference and the search for the latter is unending. (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 7)

This explains the importance of the code and sign-value consumers use to evaluate and interpret the code.

In the same manner, the purchase of a CSA share is not always about the vegetables. Previous research indicates fresh vegetables as the reason most people give for purchasing their CSA share (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone & Kakalioursas 1995; DeLind 2003; Russell and Zapeda 2008). However, even though the function or use-value of the vegetables is unique, there are multiple ways to meet that need or obtain fresh organic vegetables.

Organic foods are the fastest growing segment of the grocery market. In terms of total market share, organic food accounted for four percent of total food sales and the bulk of this share came from organic fruits and vegetables which realized a 11.8% increase since 2009 (Organic Trade Association, 2011). Fresh organic vegetables are available in most urban grocery stores. The option for farmers markets is also available.

With these other more convenient options available, why do CSA shareholders pay for vegetables in advance, not knowing what vegetables they will receive or even if they will receive any vegetables at all? If the purchase of a CSA share is only about the vegetables, there are other more convenient ways to get fresh organic vegetables. If the use-value is obtainable through different venues, what is the sign-value in that CSA share?

Sign-Value and Community Supported Agriculture. The purchase of a CSA share may represent a status symbol to the shareholder. As the organic food movement grows, getting vegetables direct from the farm may appeal to some consumers as a service or type of ownership. Or the CSA purchase may demonstrate the shareholder's commitment to a healthy diet or advertise one's concern for the environment or local economy.

It is also possible the shareholder is purchasing the vegetables from the CSA because of the relationship with the farmer. Perhaps the relationship is a nostalgic link to the past and the "way things used to be." This purchase may even be a nod toward perpetuating a way of life with which the shareholder associates images of emotional, moral, and social qualities (Groh & McFadden, 2000). Each of these possibilities is a representation of an idea or source of differentiation, a shareholder's interpretation of the "code." Following are several examples from my shareholder interviews that illustrate some of the sign-values these shareholders associated with the purchase of their CSA share.

Sign-Value: Status, Kudos, Health, Belonging. Maggie, one of the shareholders of Township Farm, said she brought the CSA vegetables or fruit to work and when people saw what she had to eat and started to ask questions, "I tell them all about our farm" she said. "We [she and her husband] call it 'our farm' or 'the farm.' We just like it so much."

This shareholder said the whole CSA experience made her feel good and she felt positive because she was doing something good for the environment. She was so convinced this use of her money was doing good she said she counted her CSA membership as a charitable contribution because it was so expensive. Despite being expensive, however, the CSA just made her feel so good. "For me" she said, "everything I thought would happen [with the CSA] and even more has happened."

In addition to eating more healthily because of her CSA vegetables, this shareholder was also surprised by the “connection she felt to the farmer and other people.” She said she asked “my farmer” to make a presentation about his CSA at her place of employment. She thought participation in a CSA would be a good idea for the people with whom she worked. She said she was “quite sure” Jeffrey picked up a couple of new shareholders because of his presentation.

Her motivation to join the CSA came from seeing the movie *Food, Inc.* She said, “When I got up off the couch I said to my husband, ‘I think we need to do something (different).’” So she started searching for CSAs close to their house. “It was the video that propelled me to action” she said. “I had thought about it before. You see that organic stuff coming into [the local grocery store] and think, ‘Really?’” She said she did not trust what they called organic in the grocery store.

In this case, the box of vegetables as the commodity is the stand-in for several very positive things. For Maggie the vegetables mean a connection to the farm and “her” farmer, kudos for doing something positive for the environment, healthy food for herself and her husband, and an experience of belonging. She said she could get organic vegetables at the grocery store or coop or farmers market, but none of them would make her feel as good.

Sign-Value: Healthy Eating, Recognition, Belonging. For Amanda, another shareholder of Township Farm, the birth of her daughter was the initial motivation to purchase the CSA share. She wanted to teach her daughter to eat healthy foods. This young shareholder, as a new mom and a new cook, expressed insecurity about preparing and using the vegetables. Amanda said her CSA share forced her to learn how to prepare the vegetables, something she had not learned when she was growing up. If she was getting vegetables at the grocery store she said she

never would have tried any new vegetables and Amanda wanted to learn about vegetables for her daughter.

Most importantly, however, the farmer remembered her name and recognized her when she picked up her share. Because of this Amanda said she loved the farm. According to Amanda, her CSA farmer from the previous year “never remembered who I was. I didn’t care so much if she [the previous CSA farmer] didn’t remember my name, but she could at least remember my face....That is a big thing for me. It felt like she never wanted to chat.” Jeffrey greeted her every week and talked to her about the vegetables.

Although Amanda was getting vegetables she could have easily obtained elsewhere, what the vegetables represented to her was the idea that she was showing her daughter how to eat healthy food. At the same time she was learning to cook fresh vegetables, something she did not learn when she was growing up. The sign-value of the CSA purchase was, in some ways, a statement of accomplishment, independence, and intention to do the very best for her daughter. In the process, this shareholder experienced a feeling of belonging and recognition simply because the farmer remembered her name and she could talk to the farmer about the vegetables.

Sign-Value: Good Feeling. Marla, a shareholder with Classic Lake Farm, dropped her CSA membership for the first part of the 2012 season because she and her husband planned on being out of town so much during the summer and she thought she had given away too many of the vegetables from the 2011 season. But about a third of the way through the season she decided she did not want to give up on her CSA and she called the farm to reactivate her membership. She said, “I missed going out there and just the concept of the whole thing is so heartwarming. So I emailed Erik and I signed up for the rest of the season.”

This shareholder actually talked very little about the vegetables, in fact she said there were often vegetables she did not recognize and did not have any intention of learning how to prepare. “Like what do I do with this Vietnamese tuber?” she said, “I give mine to Laura [her brother’s maid]. She is vegetarian and she likes to get strange tubers.” This shareholder knew getting what she considered strange vegetables was “part of the deal” and she was willing to accept what the farm put in the box and be happy with it. For this shareholder the vegetables were secondary to the “heartwarming” feeling she got from her CSA membership.

At the same time, this shareholder talked about the expense of the CSA share more than any of the shareholders I interviewed. Other shareholders mentioned the expense of the CSA share in passing, but the expense was secondary to what they received from the CSA. Marla, on the other hand, mentioned the expense and value as critical factors to her membership. At her request the farm implemented an every-other-week share for the 2013 season. This allowed Marla and her husband to be out of town and still be able to use as many of the vegetables as possible.

In many ways her response was contradictory. Even though she made of a point of telling me how expensive the CSA share was and that she had paid the extra delivery fee to pick up from a drop site instead of going to the farm for the 2013 season, it seemed her experience of going to the farm and actually seeing the farm was one of the most important aspects of her membership. She said she was always impressed with the time and attention that went into raising the vegetables.

How the CSA share fit in for this shareholder was difficult to understand. She did not like many of the vegetables. She thought it was significantly more expensive than she would have to pay at the store, where she could get just the vegetables she wanted and none of those

Vietnamese tubers. Yet for this shareholder it was the experience that was “heartwarming.” It was the idea of supporting the farm and getting the fresh, organic vegetables with which she was familiar and willing to eat.

Sign-Value: Challenge, Freedom. For Beth and her husband, Classic Lake Farm shareholders, getting the CSA box and seeing what is in it each week was “kind of like a challenge.” Beth said she and her husband tried to see how infrequently they could go to the grocery store during the summer. “We go just a couple times a month for eggs and dairy. I like having fresh food in the house and having everything you need.” She said she also liked the variety of things she got from the CSA and trying the different vegetables. The one thing she wished for was more recipes. “You can never have too many rutabaga recipes” she said.

For this shareholder getting the vegetables gave her a sense of self-sufficiency. Beth said she and her husband also purchased what she called “a big cow and pig” in the fall which they stored in their deep freezer. So they did not need to go to the grocery store very frequently. Removing herself from the mainstream grocery store and preparing her own food produced a sense of pride and independence. She said she did not consider herself a cook, but conceded others might see her as a cook because she brought her own lunch to work. She said she sees her “co-workers putting those frozen meals in the microwave and I have my frozen veggie lasagna...so” she said, “maybe other people do see me as a cook.”

This shareholder was not really connected to the farm. She had never been to the farm and did not express any curiosity or interest in going to the farm. Her CSA selection was based primarily on the convenience of the pickup location. If the pickup location was not convenient to her home or work she would just find another CSA.

However, she was dedicated to the idea of getting fresh vegetables. She liked the idea that the vegetables in her box were harvested just the previous day. Despite the fact she could have purchased vegetables harvested just the previous day at the farmers market, her preference was the CSA. For this shareholder the sign-value of the vegetables was a feeling of self-sufficiency and pride. She freed herself from the mainstream grocery store. Her diet was determined by what was in the box and her challenge was to figure out what she could do with the vegetables.

Not What I Expected... When looking at the sign-values for these CSA shareholders, I was surprised to see so much overlap with the ideas of community or *Gemeinschaft*. Even though these shareholders were not particularly interested in the “community” experience with other shareholders, what their CSA share purchase represented in terms of belonging and feeling good was similar to the ideal of community. This finding is different from what one would expect based on Baudrillard’s definition of sign-value. Baudrillard (1998) said most often the sign-value of a commodity would be something consumers associated with prestige or status, something the consumer would see as differentiating themselves. This is one way in which community supported agriculture does not fit into Baudrillard’s theory or critique of capitalism.

In some ways, what the shareholders expressed could be interpreted as a desire for differentiation, but that desire was not to engender a sense of status or prestige as Baudrillard (1998) predicted. Most of the shareholders would have been happy to share this experience with others IF their friends, family, and co-workers had been willing to share the CSA experience with them. Bonnie, a shareholder from Township Farm, said her biggest disappointment was not convincing any of her friends or family to join a CSA. She said when she went away on vacation she would give the neighbor her box and she would think, “Ok, now that they see how good it is,

they will want to join.” Unfortunately, Bonnie said her neighbors never joined the CSA even though they said they enjoyed the vegetables. “I am not a good salesman” she laughed. “I just want to help other people think this is cool.”

Cool or not, the vegetables from the CSA are not really what the shareholder is buying. The vegetables are readily available in different venues. The idea or the sign-value is what is important to the shareholder. This sign-value is a result of simulation and simulation is a result of a capitalist economy (Baudrillard, 1998). Baudrillard (1998) said it is not the greedy individual capitalist perpetuating the simulation. The system of capitalism itself is responsible for the simulation (Baudrillard, 1998).

Simulation and Capitalism. Commodities fulfill needs, but needs do not fuel a growing economy because needs can be satisfied (Baudrillard, 1975, 1998). To grow, an economy needs consumers’ most basic desire, differentiation (Baudrillard, 1975, 1998). The exacerbation of this desire “to be different” means commodities must continually change in order to meet consumers’ demand to stand out. People spend “big money” on goods designed to “confer distinction” (Heath & Potter, 2004, p. 103). There is a limit, however, to how much an actual physical commodity can be differentiated and that is how and why sign-value is imbedded into the simulation.

The capitalist system no longer merchandizes needs (Baudrillard, 1975, 1998). Capitalism merchandizes ideas or sign-values of commodities (Baudrillard, 1998). We do not buy vegetables. The vegetables we buy are laden with sign-value and our purchases reflect our interpretation of Baudrillard’s code (Baudrillard, 1998). This is the progression of the simulation.

We are living with multiple simulations right now and the progression of these simulations is the future trajectory of capitalism (Baudrillard, 1975, 1998). The trajectory heralds the gradual replacement of the real with the simulation to the point at which the simulation absorbs and replaces the real. For example, Baudrillard described city parks and nature reserves as simulations of nature.

Surrounded on all sides by the vast fabric of the city, carefully policed, and served up ‘at room temperature’ as parkland, nature reserve or background scenery for second homes, is, in fact, a recycling of Nature. That is to say, it is no longer an original, specific presence at all, standing in symbolic opposition to culture, but a simulation, a ‘consommé’ of the signs of nature set back in circulation – in short, nature recycled. (1998, p. 100-101)

In this example Baudrillard described what we now view as “nature” as a simulation of “real” or original nature. The simulation replaces the wild and untamed nature of the past with landscapes reflecting human manipulation and domination of nature and society and we do not know or understand the difference. In this case, real nature and simulated nature have become the same thing.

Alexandra Horowitz supported this idea in her book *On Looking* (2013) in which she accompanied experts on walks around New York City. In one of the early chapters she described the design and construction of Central Park which is now more or less the center of Manhattan. Originally this 840-acre plot was occupied by squatters operating sheep and pig farms and bone-boiling mills (Horowitz, 2013). Even though this area looks like real nature or a “natural landscape”, this is only by design. According to Horowitz (2013), “The park epitomizes landscape architecture: it is a constructed naturalness, with only bits and pieces of the original,

undulated topography remaining” (p. 46). Central Park is another example of the simulation replacing the “real” nature.

As part of a capitalist society, community supported agriculture is part of the simulation, albeit, not a full-fledged participant. Baudrillard (1993) said the process of simulation is picking up speed and more and more quickly replacing the real with simulation to the point of hyper-reality, which completely replaces the real. The “nature” example above is an example of hyper-reality because most of society does not distinguish between the “real” nature and the recycled nature in city parks. At the time Baudrillard introduced this simulation example, he was not yet actively applying the hyper-reality concept to his theory so he did not label this as hyper-reality.

Despite what Baudrillard (1993) said about the speeding up of the simulation, community supported agriculture in some ways is slowing down or redirecting the simulation. The following examples of simulation apply to community supported agriculture and the countercultural behavior of CSA shareholders. The first example of the simulation in conjunction with community supported agriculture farms tracks the development of the CSA concept from its beginning in 1986 to where it is today. The second example is an even broader categorization of food in general and CSA shareholders’ rejection and possible redirection of where the food simulation is going.

Simulation and CSA. Baudrillard identified three orders of simulacra, the process in which the simulation replaces what is real (Baudrillard, 1983). I apply Baudrillard’s orders of simulacra to community supported agriculture farms, assigning the “original” CSA farms in the United States, Indian Hills Farm in Massachusetts and Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire, the status of “real” CSA farms. Recognizing that Baudrillard’s Orders of Simulacra cover a significantly broader timeframe (i.e. beginning in the ‘classical’ period), I chose to regard

CSAs as an anomaly to his theory, and thus begin the CSA Orders of Simulacra with the establishment of the first CSAs in the United States.

The first order of simulacrum is the reproduction of what is an obvious replacement or fake of the original or the “counterfeit” phase (Baudrillard, 1983). In this phase the idea is the same, but the counterfeit is clearly *not* an original. Sawchuck (1994) compares this to a hand drawing or reproduction of a work of art. The picture is the same, but it is obviously a reproduction. Community supported agriculture farms first began expanding in the Northeastern United States. The expansion started here not only because of the proximity to the first CSA farms but also because of the density of the population and the nearness to major urban centers. I would not label these farms counterfeit per se, but they are clearly not the actual first CSAs.

The second order of simulacrum is the production phase. During this phase the real is being mass-produced. Sawchuck (1994) compared this to copies made using a copy machine. The copies are all duplicates, indistinguishable from one another, but still clearly reproductions of the original. For CSAs this phase is represented by the proliferation of different types of CSA farms across the U.S.

In the Midwest and on the West Coast the subscription farm, with the anonymous CSA drop sites, became the most widely-used model. The distance to the farms made the community-based farm pickup that was part of the original CSA model, significantly less practical. The distance to the farm also made the shareholder work requirement, again, part of the original CSA model, difficult for the farmer to enforce and for the shareholder to fulfill. With the anonymous drop sites some shareholders never met or even saw their farmer.

The third order of simulacrum is the full-blown simulation. In this phase the link with the “real” takes over and society has difficulty distinguishing between the real and the

simulation. Sawchuck (1994) compared this to the digitization of a work of art. With digitization it can be almost impossible to distinguish between the real and the simulation. At this point in the simulation the original is forgotten, only the name remains the same. The differentiation process is in full swing as farmers and entrepreneurs make an effort to offer the “differentiation idea” that will attract the most consumers. The middlemen buy vegetables from farmers or act as brokers for the farmers. They collect the money from the shareholders, buy the vegetables from the farmers, pack the boxes, deliver the boxes, take no risk, and call it CSA.

The middleman approaching Erik from Classic Lake Farm offering to package and distribute his farm’s produce was encroaching on the CSA label by “offering” this service or CSA simulation. The middleman was calling the service a CSA, but the middleman was not actively participating in the production of the vegetables or any part of the farming operation.

Loughridge (2002) ran into similar existing arrangements in California. All orders were placed via the internet, membership was optional, and vegetables were delivered to the front door.

As a consequence of these changes, the farmer is once again in a position of taking all the risk, exactly the situation community supported agriculture was designed to eliminate. If this simulation continues, only the name of community supported agriculture will remain. It is at the point when society is no longer able to tell the difference between the real and the simulation, that hyper-reality becomes the norm. Society’s acceptance and willingness to interchange the idea of parks for “real nature” is an example of hyper-reality. If the CSA simulation continues, and society accepts the CSA share that no longer retains any relationship with the farmer or the farm, community supported agriculture will enter hyper-reality.

Simulation and Food. Looking at food in general, the idea of simulation is more complicated because there are so many different kinds of foods and so many different

simulations occurring at the same time. Instead of following food in general, I will follow a single product, in this case iceberg lettuce. Lettuce is not a perfect example throughout the process, but it illustrates the progression.

Lettuce is unique because it can not be cooked or frozen or stored in any way. The only way to eat lettuce is fresh. Consequently almost all lettuce was raised and eaten locally until the early 1920s when the introduction of refrigerated railroad cars made it possible to transport ice covered crates of lettuce from California all over the country. As lettuce became popular the Western Growers' Protective Association started advertising iceberg lettuce in 1926 as "an internal sun-bath" (Friedberg, 2009).

Vitamins had just been discovered and lettuce was advertised to contain a "youth-prolonging 'mystery vitamin,' unnamed and still under investigation" (Friedberg, 2009, p. 170). This activity around lettuce corresponds to Baudrillard's counterfeit order of simulacrum. Lettuce itself has not changed, but the technological changes around transport and the image or ideas associated with lettuce as a result of advertising have begun to morph lettuce into something new and different.

Per capita annual lettuce consumption increased from 2.3 to 8.3 pounds during the 1920s (Friedberg, 2009), but there was more change to come. In the 1950s when vacuum packing and flash cooling in the field was discovered to extend, although not 100% reliably, the freshness of lettuce during transport, even more lettuce was sold by U.S. grocers. Growers continued increasing their lettuce production. In 1961 growers began shrink wrapping lettuce because homemakers were beginning to prefer the convenience of canned and processed food to the fresh food that required more work. The shrink wrapping did the trick and lettuce came to be viewed as a convenience food (Friedberg, 2009).

From 1960 to 1989 lettuce consumption grew from 21.8 pounds per capita to a peak of 28.7 pounds per capita (USDA, 2010). This period is Baudrillard's second order of simulacrum, the production period. During this time California farmers were looking for ways to increase production and introducing ways to extend the shelf life of "fresh" lettuce to satisfy the cosmetic perceptions of homemakers who purchased most of the lettuce (Friedberg, 2009).

The introduction of the third order of simulacrum, the full-scale simulation, began in 1988 when the breathable Keep Crisp bag was introduced and pre-packaged salads were made available to the consumer. This bag allowed lettuce processors to package and keep lettuce *looking* fresh for up to two weeks. Friedberg (2009) said most consumers are not going to notice the high-tech features that are part of the packaged salad and, consumers are not supposed to notice. "The produce, after all, is supposed to look fresh-cut; the packaging should not suggest that one's salad has actually spent a fortnight sitting in a highly engineered environment" (Friedberg, 2009, p. 191).

The lettuce growers and processors have managed to package the lettuce completely divorced from the original idea and perception of lettuce. No longer is locality an issue. At the same time, the labor involved with the planting, harvesting, cleaning, and preparation of the lettuce is also out of sight. We are left with the simulation of "fresh" lettuce as a prepackaged, gas-filled plastic bag full of greens. No dirt, no sweat, no nature is included.

Speeding up. The simulation is speeding up. Lettuce had been eaten locally since the Egyptians first started eating lettuce more than 4000 years ago. But since the introduction of refrigerated shipping in the early twentieth century the ideas and images of lettuce have gone through a series of changes from a healthful green with "yet unnamed mystery vitamins" (Friedberg, 2009, p. 170) to gas-filled plastic bag products that keep the lettuce "fresh" for up to

two weeks. After more than 4000 years of being available for consumption only on a local basis, the consumption and availability of lettuce was transformed in less than eighty years.

This speeding up of the simulation happened with all kinds of foods. Without going into the details of the simulation, how much real chicken is in McDonald's Chicken McNuggets? Michael Pollan (2006) found that 56% of a McNugget is corn. Thirteen of the 38 ingredients in a chicken McNugget are derived directly from corn and the actual chicken is part of the remaining 25 ingredients (Pollan, 2006). For many people this simulated food product has replaced the original and the simulation is the "real" chicken.

Ironically, this simulation acceleration is precisely what creates a space, temporary though it may be, for community supported agriculture. Boorstin (1962) said we identify things by what they are not. Baudrillard (1983) expanded on this idea saying, "It is always a matter of proving the real by the imaginary, proving the truth by scandal, proving law by the transgression, proving work by the strike, and proving capital by revolution" (1983, p. 36). Taking Baudrillard one step further, CSAs prove food by food-like substances, such as real potatoes vs. french fries, fresh tomatoes vs. ketchup, eggs vs. powdered eggs, roasted chicken vs. chicken McNuggets, or organic seasonal heirloom tomatoes vs. the hard, round, ethylene-ripened tomatoes from Florida available 12 months out of the year.

Although it is more difficult to adulterate vegetables directly, we see the adulteration or simulation of vegetables in the way tomatoes have been bred for shelf life and appearance instead of taste (Estabrook, 2011). We also see the simulation of vegetables in canned soups, frozen dinners, prepared sauces, and other processed foods. These types of prepackaged foods, for many people, are dietary staples. Beth, one of the CSA shareholders, for example, talked about watching her co-workers "putting those frozen meals in the microwave." What often

accompanies “those frozen meals in the microwave” is the idea or simulation of healthy or low fat eating because of how the manufacturer packages and promotes the frozen meal.

Pollan (2001) described part of the process of putting together an organic frozen meal from Cascadian Farms in Oregon.

Fresh broccoli, for instance travels from a farm in the Central Valley to a plant in Sanger, Calif., where it is cut into florets, blanched and frozen. The broccoli is trucked to Alberta, Canada, there to meet up with pieces of organic chicken that have already made a stop at a processing plant in Salem, Ore., where they were defrosted, injected with marinade, cubed, cooked and refrozen. They don't call it processed food for nothing. (p. 35)

Pollan (2001) interviewed a vice president for marketing for Cascadian Farms about using the organic label. This vice president told Pollan (2001) that all the company needed to say was “organic.” After the word “organic” the consumer filled in the blanks. At that point Pollan (2001) said he understood the “genius” of the new slogan used by the company, “Taste You Can Believe In.” This slogan, empty words on its own, left the customer to make it mean what the customer wanted it to mean (Pollan, 2001). Cascadian Farms Vice President R. Brooks Gekler told Pollan that it is “much better to let the consumers fill in the marketing message – *healthier, more nutritious, no pesticides, more wholesome, sustainable, safer, purer* – because these are controversial comparative claims” (as cited by Pollan, 2001, p. 36). By letting the customer fill in what they want to believe, the company is not responsible for the consumers' conclusions.

This slogan, “Taste You Can Believe In” fits with Baudrillard's (1998) discussion about advertising when he said that “advertising syntagms do not explain, do not offer any meaning,

and are therefore neither true nor false” (p. 128). Going in this direction one can see the simulation taking place. As part of the simulation, industrial food processors take the real or original food products, add value by cutting, blanching, freezing, trucking, defrosting, injecting, cubing, cooking, and refreezing and then charge more money. The corporation allows customers to draw their own conclusions about the product. For many households today it is not that they can not “see” the difference between real food and food-like substances, but as part of the simulation, the food-like substances have come to be recognized as adequate or appropriate substitutes for the “real.”

Baudrillard (1998) said something only has meaning in comparison to something else. In this case, the concept of community supported agriculture is successful because of the depersonalization of the current food culture. It is the comparison of what the farmers may call the “real” organic produce from community supported agriculture farms to the non-organic produce from unknown sources available at grocery stores that gives community supported agriculture “something” to sell.

For some shareholders that CSA “something”, applying Baudrillard’s theory, may be the idea that the produce from a community supported agriculture farm comes from the farm and not from the grocery store. Or that “something” may be taste. Estabrook (2011) quotes Peter Hoffman, chef of the Savoy and Back Forty in Manhattan, NY, “The lesson is that people really appreciate good flavor. You can fool a lot of folks into eating crap, but they notice the difference immediately when you give them something truly good” (p. 187). In the end, the CSA experience can be whatever shareholders want their CSA experience to be, but it will almost always be in contrast to something else. In most cases, that “something” will be something that makes the

CSA shareholder feel good about their purchase and CSA commitment vs. a trip to the grocery store.

Paying for Free Time. In some ways the simulated food has the same, if not greater, value to the consumer because of the perceived convenience. This is how the consumer ends up even paying for “free time” as part of the simulation. Baudrillard (1998) said, “Free time itself has to be directly or indirectly purchased before it can be ‘consumed,’” (p. 153). In his example frozen orange juice is less expensive than liquid orange juice in a carton, because the price for the liquid orange juice includes the two minutes gained over preparing the frozen product. “In this way” Baudrillard said, “the consumer’s own free time is being sold to him” (p. 153).

This perception of “free time” however, is also a simulation. In his book *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*, Michael Pollan (2013) described a one-night experiment with his own family in which they all ate microwave meals. The meal, Pollan (2013) said, took nearly as much time to prepare as a “respectable homemade dinner” (p. 199). This was especially true when one took into consideration the fact that only one person’s meal was in the microwave at one time and that “one or another of us was constantly having to get up to check the microwave” (Pollan, 2013, p. 199). After this meal, Pollan (2013) said that indeed it might be more appropriate to “attribute the triumph of this kind of eating to laziness and a lack of skills or confidence...rather than to a genuine lack of time” (p. 199).

At the same time, what Baudrillard classified as the consumer’s purchase of free time, for others might be classified as an investment in happiness. Dunn and Norton (2013) described how some purchases that “reduce or eliminate the worst minutes of our day” (p. 60) can provide a big payoff in terms of happiness. That payoff, however, is conditional in that it only materializes if the investment in the time that is “purchased” is not something that simply

increases our efficiency. These efficiency types of investments frequently make us feel as if we have less time (Dunn & Norton, 2013).

For example, we perceive that fast food saves time and, by extension, gives us more time to enjoy. DeVoe and Zhong (2013), however, found that even being reminded of fast food at an unconscious level created situations in which people made choices that reflected more impatience. What Dunn and Norton (2013) called “time affluence” essentially can be created just like the “too busy” feelings.

This is another way in which the vegetables purchased from a CSA farmer counter the current simulation. Shareholders pay for a box of vegetables and these vegetables can create, in some cases at least, a perception of requiring more time for preparation. Often, however, it is simply time spent doing different types of food preparation activities such as “checking the microwave” (Pollan, 2013) rather than actually requiring more time.

Pollan (2013) said society behaves as if leisure activities should be confined to consumption type activities and “any activity involving production is leisure’s opposite: work” (p. 131). As a result we are more willing to buy into the capitalist idea that we should outsource any activity the marketplace can do for us as soon as we can afford to purchase that service (Pollan, 2013). Hence the vegetable preparation time and activity are classified as work and something that society prefers to outsource.

The food from the CSA box creates conflicts for shareholders because the vegetables require the shareholder take care of it NOW instead of when the shareholder chooses. Amanda, the young mom and new cook, said, “I am still learning to manage how to eat everything before it goes bad. The food from the CSA doesn’t keep as long as the ‘standard stuff’ from the grocery store.” Other shareholders also commented on this. It was hard, one shareholder said, when she

was trying to use everything in the box. “Sometimes we get a lot of one thing, like three heads of cabbage. If I do not have time to use everything or we are out of town, then I feel bad about that [not using everything in the box].”

Another shareholder found herself with more eggplant than she could use. She said, “I spent a couple of early mornings cutting and roasting eggplant with a little olive oil and salt [before work] and then freezing it.” Now, she said, she is using it on pizza with some extra cheese and her ten-year-old thinks it tastes like mushrooms. The shareholder was delighted because she found a way to use the CSA eggplant even though she never would have purchased the eggplant in the first place.

Even though it was perceived sometimes as inconvenient, the shareholders I interviewed were willing to do the extra work instead of buying “prepped” vegetables in the store. I interviewed Maggie who was a shareholder with Township Farms. She said, “I get all these veggies that I must do something with. There are a lot of things competing for my time in the summer. I end up needing to freeze or do something else with some of the produce.” Sometimes in the summer trying to use everything felt like a burden to Maggie. “I feel so guilty sometimes” she said. But she was happy to have the frozen produce in the winter. I interviewed Maggie in December and she was quite proud because with her winter share and the produce she had frozen she was still primarily eating produce from “the farm.”

Again, there is something counter to the simulation going on. The guilt and inconvenience could all be avoided by purchasing vegetables from the farmers market or grocery store. Since these shareholders chose to pay in advance for vegetables not even knowing what (or if) they would receive, the purchase of the CSA share is more than the box of vegetables. There is some other benefit or sign-value that accompanied the CSA share purchase. Thompson

and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) said the CSA experience gives shareholders a chance to escape the “globalized food chain” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b, p. 298) and experience something local and sustainable rather than cheap and convenient.

Veggies and Relationship. Results from my shareholder survey showed that the most frequently given reason for joining the CSA had to do with supporting a local farm or getting vegetables from a local farmer and knowing their food was locally grown. The vegetables themselves were the second most frequently given reason for joining the CSA. This was an interesting result. It went a long way to understanding the shareholders’ relationship with the farmer and the shareholders’ awareness of where their food was coming from. These things are antithetical to the simulation. If this relationship and awareness is important enough to motivate shareholders to behave in a way that, in Baudrillard’s theory, would be counter-intuitive and against the system, then something that can not be replicated by the simulation is occurring.

The missing “something” in the current available venues for purchasing vegetables is the relationship and the idea of knowing who is growing the food. In other words, there is an element of trust, something Tönnies (1955) also talked about as an important part of *Gemeinschaft*. The “trust” element is less easily simulated by capitalism. But, one should never rule out the possibility of the marketplace attempting to provide a simulation of anything in which there is a prospect of profit.

McFadden (Groh & McFadden, 2000) raised the specter of simulating the shareholder/farmer relationship when he described the “ludicrous” example of Olde McDonald as farmer for a national CSA franchise (see Chapter Two). Looking at my shareholders’ survey comments about their farmers, however, Olde McDonald would not cut it. What Olde McDonald could not simulate would be the pleasure, pride, and unpolished enthusiasm farmers

convey with the vegetables they deliver. This can not be simulated because it is not obvious. It is not material. It is not something that is easily or readily identifiable even for the shareholders who value it.

This intangible is the farmers' contentment and their engagement with their craft. Creating "things," or craftsmanship, influences our dealings with other people because the difficulties and possibilities involved in creation apply to human relationships as well (Sennett 2008). Some of this farmer/shareholder engagement was obvious in the interviews I conducted.

For example, Betty talked about being surprised at how engaged the farmers at Neighborhood Farm were and how much they wanted to talk about the vegetables when she picked up her share. Or Amanda, as a new mom and a new cook, was so pleased that Jeffrey at Township Farm was willing to talk to her about the vegetables and how to prepare them. Or Kaari being so delighted at meeting her farmer and going back to promote the CSA at her church. She wanted to promote the CSA not only because it was good for the environment, but also because she just felt so comfortable talking to her farmer, Erik.

Erik's engagement and love of farming was also obvious in one of his newsletters from 2012.

Farming brings people closer together than just about anything I can think of. Maybe it is just the long hours or the commiserating about all of the little and big tragedies that are daily occurrences in farming vegetables in the Midwest. But I believe it is also the acknowledgement of all the simple and profound joys of each day...I wish I could share with you all the moments of pleasure and grace we experience here at Classic Lake Farm. No visit ever conveys the true beauty felt here. For that beauty only comes in the heat of the work and is shared fully by

only those who do that work together over a whole season. Slow steady joy is perhaps the provenance of only those who do slow steady work. I love it!

Where is community supported agriculture now? Despite all the good feeling, the simulation continues and even though community supported agriculture may have thwarted the progress temporarily, the “system” is too powerful to leave this vestige of the “real” behind. Earlier in this chapter I charted the progression of community supported agriculture through Baudrillard’s (1998) Orders of Simulacra. At this point community supported agriculture is between the second order of production and the third order of full-fledged simulacra. The second order is the reproduction of different types of CSAs all over the U.S. and the third order is the introduction and overpowering influence of the CSA middleman and vegetable broker.

For the moment, community supported agriculture has arrested a part of the spiraling farm and food simulations for a tiny piece of the market. By re-establishing the consumer connection, implementing the idea of relationship and community, and cooking real food, at least one small part of the simulation has slowed down. The capitalist mindset, however, will eventually take the relationship idea out of the marketing mix for fresh vegetables unless shareholders and farmers continue to support and sustain the somewhat countercultural idea of community supported agriculture.

Only two of the farms in my study had enough history to provide any anecdotes about turnover rates for members, but both Erik at Classic Lake Farm and Jeffrey from Township Farm cited a number very close to 50% turnover. It is clear not every shareholder establishes a relationship with their farmer. Nor does every shareholder experience or appreciate the farmers’

craftsmanship and/or the Type I (intrinsic) behavior (see Motivation section of Chapter Four) that defines a large part of the farmer motivation and satisfaction with their profession.

It is more unusual that shareholders would identify or recognize these aspects of the farmer and the community supported agriculture model than that the shareholder would not recognize these features. These things, “the magical, the religious, and the symbolic” (Baudrillard, 1975, p. 87) are pushed to the margins of the economy. Even when every attempt is made to prevent the overtaking of these nonmaterial concepts by the political economy, it is impossible to prevent the “determination by the economic in the last instance” (Baudrillard, 1975, p. 87). The simulation blinds people to the existence of aspects outside of the material capitalist and economic system. This limits the number of people with the potential to significantly “interrupt” the simulation.

The progression of simulation for community supported agriculture has significantly speeded up and in less than 30 years we are between the second and third orders of simulacra. It is as if a little detour has been made and without care or monitoring, this tiny countercultural blip will be re-inculcated with the larger society and simulation. So what can be done to sustain the idea of community supported agriculture? In a capitalist society the answer might be a double-edged sword...Advertising.

Advertising is hope. The very idea of “advertising” as a survival mechanism is almost antithetical to the idea of genuineness and community in community supported agriculture. But for CSAs to survive and for this “slow down” in the simulation progression to continue, more people need to be aware of and participating in community supported agriculture farming and eating. In this simulation that means publicity, advertising, and a more high-profile presence of

community supported agriculture to attract more shareholders. How does advertising do this? Advertising sells hope (Baudrillard, 1998).

People see and hear what they hope to be. “The greatest effort goes into the realization, not of dreams, but of illusions” (Boorstin, 1962, p. 212). Advertising is effective by selling illusions, or sign-values. Although it is easy to discount these sign-values and illusions as untruths, they are not lies. If it were the veracity of the advertising that was in question, it would be “easy to unmask” (Baudrillard 1998, p. 127, Boorstin, 1962). The problem is that advertising is neither true nor false.

The *New York Times* Ethicist, Chuck Klosterman described advertising as creating “unreal associations between products and lifestyles. Beer commercials show beer-drinkers living dynamic lives, so the implication is that consuming a certain type of beer will make your life more exciting” (2014, para. 4). Klosterman called this an unreal message, but something everyone knows is part of the advertising message. If this is an element of the simulation, how do you judge the truth in a simulation when the definition of the simulation is the absorption of the real by the simulation itself?

We come back to Baudrillard’s example (1983) of simulating a theft in a department store. There is no objective difference between a simulated theft and a real theft. The same is true with advertising. “The advertiser’s art...consists largely of the art of making persuasive statements which are neither true nor false” (Boorstin, 1962, p. 214). Being neither true nor false, advertising statements can not be judged for truth. For example, Michael Pollan (2001) talked about the genius of Cascadian Farms’ slogan, Taste You Can Believe In.

“The only inflexible ethical expectation” according to Klosterman (2014), “is that [the advertiser] won’t lie to you directly. They can’t fabricate factual data” (Klosterman, 2014, para.

7). The consuming public has become inured to this kind of advertising speak or proliferation of the “code.” To a certain extent, the public has learned to “trust” this proliferation because this is the only kind of advertising speak with which the consumer is familiar.

For CSAs to use advertising to increase their market visibility and product placement would mean selling the sign-values shareholders associate with CSAs and creating new sign-values that, by definition, have no meaning. It would mean participating in the simulation and using these tools to create a façade to sell the “real” – the thing shareholders actually value. Advertising would potentially remove the mystery and the “je ne sais quoi” of the farmer/shareholder relationship and replace it with a glossy brochure and a business plan.

Is advertising really necessary to expand the CSA market share? How else is it done? In order to slow down the simulation, CSAs need more shareholders. In order to encourage more shareholders to “join” the movement, CSAs need to increase awareness of what they are and what they do. It would appear CSAs need to participate in the simulation to counter the simulation. This does not mean there are no other alternatives, but because we do not have experience outside of the simulation, we are trapped (Baudrillard, 1975).

We reproduce what we know. We describe, judge, and evaluate everything around us by that with which we are familiar and from that perspective there are no other alternatives, at least no other alternatives we can recognize. “Models never go beyond their shadows. Be it infinitely diversified and complicated, a model of political economy never permits us to go beyond political economy or to grasp what is on this side of it (or elsewhere)” (Baudrillard, 1975, p. 87).

Because we are living in the simulation it is our “reality” and the simulation is the only reality perspective CSA members know. We can not recognize something that is not part of the simulation. Ironically, the very thing that makes CSAs stand out from the fray is the very thing

that would be changed in order to be recognized. Advertising would gloss over CSAs' lack of gloss and that lack of gloss and relationship would be the very thing CSAs would be selling.

One Possibility... Considering the group of shareholders I interviewed represented the more dedicated and committed CSA shareholders, I suggest at least this group of shareholders and farmers share the Type I (intrinsic) personality traits (see Chapter Four). In terms of recruiting new CSA shareholders advertising could be used most effectively to directly (or indirectly) appeal to these personality traits. Since we, as humans, tend to appreciate and gravitate toward people most like ourselves, perhaps the element that most attracts the long term shareholder is the shared appeal to their intrinsic motivation.

It is at this point sign-values and images become the substitute for selling fresh produce. It is not the produce the shareholder purchases, it is an idea. It is an image. It is a feeling. It is the simulation. In this scenario community supported agriculture must participate in the simulation to bring about the possibility of slowing down or arresting the spiral toward hyper-reality.

If one assumes these Type I personality traits can be channeled through advertising to connect with the desires for autonomy, mastery, and purpose for potential shareholders, is it possible we may find a way to reduce the 50% turnover rate for most CSAs? Could it be the current CSA experience does not appeal to individuals for whom autonomy, mastery, and purpose are not important characteristics? Would a different type of advertising and marketing strategy be more effective at influencing or recruiting the Type X (extrinsic) individual to participate in a different CSA business model specially designed to address *their* needs?

CSAs have already started down this road, not advertising per se, but using the space provided by internet communication to construct and promote themselves and a chosen "image."

In 2007 to 2010 Dawn Press and Eric Arnould examined CSA websites in 50 states and concluded that CSAs have abandoned their countercultural roots and co-opted with consumerism, big food, and profit seeking. In other words, based on Press and Arnould's research (2011) CSAs are already active participants in the consumer marketplace and, by extension, the simulation. This is the same consumer marketplace, or simulation, the original CSAs sought to eschew.

Press and Arnould - American Pastoralist Ideology

Dawn Press and Eric Arnould (2011) said community supported agriculture has moved from a point of countercultural phenomenon to mainstream commercial enterprise by perpetuating the myth of American pastoralism via CSA websites. Using the tools and methods championed by other commercial enterprises, according to Press and Arnould (2011), community supported agriculture negated its countercultural origins. There are two ideas in Press & Arnould's (2011) basic premise that require some additional discussion. First, what does the ideology of American Pastoralism represent and how does this idea apply to community supported agriculture? Second, what is counterculture and does community supported agriculture really fit this mould?

American Pastoralist Ideology and Community Supported Agriculture. Pastoralism is not uniquely American, but it is especially strong in the American psyche because of the ideal Europeans placed upon the untouched landscape of the New World (Marx, 1964). This ideal was “the way the world might have been supposed to look before the beginning of civilization” (Marx, 1964, p. 36). Even the Indians, previously unknown to Europeans, reflected the simplicity and character of the primitive for Europeans (Marx, 1964). This picture of the New World as a garden and a source of plenty drew upon “utopian aspirations that Europeans always

had cherished, and that had given rise, long before the discovery of America, to a whole series of idealized, imaginary worlds” (Marx, 1964, p. 39-40).

So, there is a source for this American pastoralist ideology. However, this more modern version of pastoralism, closely linked to industry and technology rather than landscape, did not arise until the late eighteenth century (Marx, 1964). This modern pastoralism was a belief that technology and industry could be allowed to conquer and dominate nature to create a sort of natural utopia with rural ideals and values as dominant themes. No limits were set, however, on how far industry and technology could go in destroying nature to create that natural utopia. As a result, the border of what is called the middle landscape, where nature and civilization meet, continues to be pushed farther into a vague and undefined region of idealism (Marx, 1964). The consequence of this unidentified encroachment was an attempt to have it both ways, “to continue defining its [the nation’s] purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth, and power” (Marx, 1964, p. 226).

Marx (1964) identified two types of pastoral ideology - the first, popular and sentimental and the second, imaginative and complex. The popular and sentimental version of pastoralism Marx (1964) described as “less of a thought and more of a feeling” (p. 5). This sentimental version is a yearning for something simpler, an idyllic and somewhat disingenuous desire to exist with “nature.” This is an idea of the “mass culture” (Marx, 1964, p. 7) and a form of something Marx called primitivism.

This idea leads to “an empty pastoralism” (Cannovo, 2001, p. 77) reflecting a consumer culture both unappreciative and lacking understanding of the toll and destruction accompanying the modern technological society. There is a lack of recognition that in sustaining the consumerist values spurred by industry and technology, nature must give way. America enjoys,

even demands, the fruits of technology and industry, while overlooking the social and environmental costs those technological and industrial products extract (Marx, 1964). The industry society wants destroys nature which society says it regards as important (Marx, 1964).

The same sentimental feeling is also reflected in what Marx (1964) described as “high” culture or the art and literature of the day. The desire Marx described as infantile in common culture, is transformed into a powerful tool in the hands of the artists and writers who “enrich and clarify our [the U.S.] experience” (p. 11). The idealism of the writers and painters of the day is best understood when contrasted against the reshaping and mechanization of the landscape by technology (Marx, 1964). The artists’ response to this mechanization is the artists’ version of pastoralism that is both imaginative and complex (Marx, 1964).

This conflict between what Americans wanted to believe about the idyllic rural life and landscape and what was actually happening to nature and wilderness because of technology and industry was, according to Marx (1964), portrayed and illustrated in the literature. Marx (1964) described it as a “yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence ‘closer to nature’” (p. 6). Some authors equated the pastoralist ideology on par with American exceptionalism (Press & Arnould, 2011, Luedicke et al., 2010) which, like pastoralist ideology, is comprised of ideas and images that shape the national identity and create a sense of a shared common cause among U.S. citizens (Lipset, 1997).

What is attractive about the pastoralist ideas according to Marx (1964) is the “felicity represented by an image of a natural landscape, a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural” (p. 9). Regardless of the landscape, however, it is a step away from the expectations and requirements of society and civilization. It is a movement toward its converse, back to nature

(Marx, 1964). It is in this situation Marx (1964) saw farmers with the potential to become cult figures.

Instead of striving for wealth, status, and power, he [the farmer] may be said to live a good life in a rural retreat; he rests content with a few simple possessions, enjoys freedom from envying others, feels little or no anxiety about his property, and, above all, he does what he likes to do. (Marx, 1964, p. 98)

Nash (2001), on the other hand, suggested farmers are getting the short end of the stick. Society wants to believe farmers occupy the pastoral realm of the middle landscape, described by art and literature as offering the best of nature and civilization (Nash, 2001). However, Nash suggested something else. “Isn’t it conceivable that the rural option has been, in fact, the worst of both worlds lacking both those campfires and computers?” (Nash, 2001, p. 384).

Paul Shephard (1973) also questioned the pastoral respite of the farm. While the “pleasures of quiet, space, and fresh air are found in the country” (p. 241), these pleasures are not because of agriculture, these are simply properties of nature. Farm life, or what Shephard called the “peasant existence” (Shephard, 1973, p. 242), is dull and not a lifestyle for which most people would settle. The farmer who is self sufficient emotionally as well as materially is as close as a farmer can come to living the ideal pastoral life in harmony with nature (Shephard, 1973). According to Shephard (1973), most of the population only admires the country assuming they can leave the country and go back to the city.

These ideas about the farm reflect the inconsistency of the pastoralist ideology Press and Arnould (2011) cited as a springboard for the unleashing of the community supported agriculture format into the mainstream marketplace. By capitalizing on the simplistic pastoralist ideology, the CSA business model gained legitimacy as a mainstream marketing vehicle and, as such, no

longer retains its countercultural foothold as an alternative food source. To better understand what Press and Arnould (2011) described, one must understand what countercultural means and how important food was in supporting and sustaining the countercultural ideology of the 1960s.

Counterculture and Community Supported Agriculture. Counterculture as defined by Roszak (1995) is “a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion” (p. 42). Writing about the 1960s as the hippie and commune movements were coming to the fore, Roszak (1995) described the ideology of the movement as a generational struggle for survival. The younger generation was seeing the errors of the older generation with their new eyes (Roszak, 1995).

The choices made by the younger generation, leaving behind the comforts of their homes and middle-class families to essentially become beggars, were a “formidable gesture of dissent” (Roszak, 1995, p. 34). The choices these young people made were against the “pathological passivity on the part of the adult generation” (Roszak, 1995, p. 22). The adults had opted to believe nothing could be done to combat the dominance of corporate America. By believing nothing could be done this generation, in the eyes of the young people, “surrendered their responsibility for making morally demanding decisions, for generating ideals,...for safeguarding the society against its despoilers” (Roszak, 1995, p. 22).

So this counterculture was necessary to “save” the world. Roszak (1995) admitted to taking a risky position with this declaration but, he said, “It is the youth, arriving with eyes that can see the obvious who must remake the lethal culture of their elders, and who must remake it in desperate haste” (p 48). This counterculture, that Roszak (1995) said could save the world, was a disparate group of young people and one of their tools to facilitate this change was food.

In his book *Appetite for Change* (2007), Warren Belasco described ways in which food was used by the hippie counterculture in the 1960s, which he dubbed countercuisine. The three elements of countercuisine include: 1) The avoidance of processed or, what Belasco called, “plastic” food (p.4); 2) Ways to make food more fun through the elements of craftsmanship, experimentation and ethnic cooking; 3) Emphasizing organics and being involved in the process of growing and distributing food. This countercuisine emphasized the decentralization of food production and encouraged distribution via small farmers and cooperatives.

Community supported agriculture not only includes all three elements of “countercuisine”, but also filled Roszak’s definition of a counterculture originally taking on “the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion” (Roszak, 1995, p. 42). The components of countercuisine are clearly elemental in the CSA model in the following ways. The CSA vegetable distribution champions the avoidance of processed foods and every week shareholders grapple with the idea of craftsmanship involved in dealing with the vegetable delivery. In addition, many farms offer shareholders the opportunity to visit the farm and participate to some degree in the growing process. These now mainstream elements in terms of food, were countercultural in the 1960s. This counterculture was calling into question the acquiescence of the WWII generation to corporate food production and development (Rozsak, 1995).

Since the 1970s corporate food interests have recognized and capitalized upon many of the concerns and complaints of the countercuisine movement. As a result, these countercultural food ideas and anxieties have become fodder for profit and opportunism (Belasco, 2007). Small organic farms and processors have been taken over by corporate food giants (Strom, 2012). Eighty percent of organic produce sales in the U.S. include brands owned by large corporate

conglomerates such as Archer Daniels Midland, ConAgra, Heinz, Kellogg and Mars (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007a). Engler (2012) described corporate moves to acquire organic brands.

General Mills markets the Cascadian Farms and Muir Glen brands; Kraft owns Back to Nature and Boca Foods, which makes soy burgers. Within the last few years Dean Foods, the dairy giant, has acquired Horizon Organic and White Wave, maker of Silk organic soymilk. Groupe Danone, the French dairy company, owns Stonyfield Farm. (p. 2)

“The fact is organic food has become a wildly lucrative business for Big Food and a premium-price-means-premium-profit section of the grocery store” (Strom, 2012).

In many cases, the “organic” label was retained after these acquisitions, but often the original ideas of “organic” being locally and sustainably produced, were not sustained (Engler, 2012). Stonyfield Yogurt, once a small organic producer in New Hampshire was purchased by the French food product company Groupe Danone in 2001 and now uses milk from New Zealand, bananas from Ecuador, and apple products from Turkey (Engler, 2012). When consumers are paying the premium for organic, these kinds of product inputs create a “mockery of what people think they are buying when they pay extra for an ecofriendly label (Engler, 2012, p. 2).

That leaves community supported agriculture as an anomaly in the non-corporate food chain. Press and Arnould (2011) said that, while community supported agriculture has not historically been seen as a big corporate profit center, CSAs have used these once countercultural elements to capitalize upon fears and concerns about food and to market themselves to the mainstream consumer. This approach, according to Press and Arnould (2011), has transformed the image and market position of CSAs to the extent that the original countercultural aspects of

community supported agriculture have been lost. Community supported agriculture, instead of eschewing consumerism and conspicuous consumption, has positioned itself as a consumer good and a form of consumption and consumerism that “is not demonized, rather it is highlighted as a path to moral superiority” (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 190).

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) have similarly documented community-supported agriculture’s emergence as a countercultural market system in response to the commercial cooptation of the organic food movement. However, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007a) said CSA farms have not co-opted. Instead CSAs have used their countercultural positioning to promote their product as an alternative to the corporatized organic options available in grocery stores.

CSAs have taken advantage of food fears and consumer desires and used their websites to associate pastoralist ideas with their farms and legitimize their market position (Press & Arnould, 2011). This legitimization is demonstrated in the rapid increase in the number of CSA farms from 1,700 in 2005 to more than 12,500 in 2007 (USDA, 2009). In some cases this growth and competition has made it harder for small farms to fill their distribution lists. It is also possible CSA farms may become victims of their own success and not be able to keep up with their own growth. In the end this may mean CSAs could succumb to the “administrations” of larger, deeper-pocketed corporations. In any case, Press and Arnould (2011) said CSAs have successfully exploited the pastoralist ideology to the extent that community supported agriculture may need to discard its countercultural identity.

CSA: From Counter Culture to Mainstream. Press and Arnould (2011) trace pastoralist ideology as the stimulus not only for community supported agriculture, but also for the growth of the suburbs in the 1950s and the hippie and commune movement in the 1970s. All

three of these movements were shaped by the pastoralist ideology that involved escaping the press of urban life and moving closer to the middle landscape where civilization and wilderness meet (Press & Arnould, 2011). CSAs, once considered a countercultural model, have used pastoralist ideology to create legitimacy and position itself in the mainstream marketplace (Press & Arnould, 2011).

As with suburbia and communes, the ideology of American pastoralism has transformed the CSA share into a tool used to promote a consumer lifestyle (Press & Arnould, 2011). The comparison between the pastoralist suburban image and CSAs is that “production has been outsourced to farming specialists” (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 190). The contrast between the rural commune and community supported agriculture is that consumption, rather than being denounced, now represents a path to moral superiority. In this setting the industrial food complex replaces corporate America as the “key symbol of the discontents of urban civilization” (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 190).

Analyzing CSA websites from 50 states between 2007 and 2010, Press and Arnould (2011), defined five “codes” used by websites to commercialize these pastoralist ideals. These ideals essentially recycle the pastoralist myths and illusions associated with suburban development and the rural communes. These codes included: “the desire to be separated from filth and pollution; the desire to be part of a small community; tensions of the middle landscape; fear and risk; and moral superiority” (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 180). Press and Arnould (2011) cited website examples for each of these codes, showing how farmers used pastoralist ideals to promote the produce they sold and the way of life they were attempting to simulate.

The examples from CSA websites cited by Press and Arnould (2011) clearly represented the ideas and frequently unrecognized aspirations of the CSA member. Essentially the farm

websites were not selling vegetables. In terms of the Baudrillardian simulation, these websites were selling ideas and feelings that could be embodied in the act of purchasing vegetables from a CSA farm.

Five Codes and Pastoralism. After reading Press and Arnould's (2011) study, I went back to the websites of the farms in my study. As discussed earlier, of the five farms in my study only three farms had functioning websites by the middle of the 2013 CSA season. All of the farms had Facebook pages. Two farms updated their Facebook pages daily, sometimes multiple times per day. The other three farms posted to their Facebook pages a few times per week. The farms with websites updated their websites regularly and the newsletters were easy to locate.

I specifically reviewed the existing websites for the five codes identified by Press and Arnould (2011). There was only one farm website from which I was able to identify three of the five codes. The identifiable codes included separation from filth and pollution, mitigation of fear and risk from industrially-raised vegetables and the middle landscape tension. I did not find the codes for community and moral superiority immediately identifiable on the website. The other two functioning websites were primarily sales vehicles with descriptions of the vegetables raised, how to become a shareholder, and access to weekly newsletters.

Even if I did not identify the codes on the farm websites, it was not that the codes did not exist within the purview of the website. The blogs and newsletters were heavily pastoral. It did not take long to identify one or more of the codes in the blogs or newsletters, but these publications were not immediately available, one needed to navigate to these sites. Reviewing Facebook posts one usually found one or more of the codes in a post, but in many of the cases the posts were also Tweets and limited in length.

Because of the rapid changes occurring in social media and the maturing CSA marketplace, I thought the Press and Arnould (2011) study simply no longer applied. Websites are becoming passé; social media is becoming dominant. Websites may have different functionality in different parts of the U.S.

At the same time the codes did occur within the newsletters and Facebook posts, just not directly on the websites themselves. Press and Arnould (2011) identified these pastoralist codes as something similar to a sales vehicle that ultimately facilitated the farms' move to market legitimacy. The pastoralist ideas still existed but the pastoralist ideology was so much a part of community supported agriculture the farms had, in some ways, moved beyond the need to use pastoralism to sell their vegetables.

The five codes identified by Press and Arnould were not so much a part of the farmers' overt sales strategy, but these codes were a part of what many of the shareholders have come to expect from their CSA experience. These codes were very much identifiable coming from the shareholders themselves. It could be the farmers have done such a good job communicating these codes in the past that it is simply not necessary for the farmers to use this pastoralist ideology to "sell" their vegetables anymore. It is also possible the farmers were never really using pastoralist ideology to "sell" their vegetables.

In the current food culture, perhaps these codes and pastoral ideology are such an integral part of the culture that the "codes" represent something shareholders actually seek out spontaneously. Perhaps the increasing popularity and market legitimacy of community supported agriculture is an "organic" (pardon the pun) movement in and of itself. Perhaps it is not so much the farm "selling", as the shareholder "buying." Going back to shareholder interviews I identified multiple examples of all five of Press and Arnould's (2011) codes.

Code 1: Separation from Filth and Pollution. Press and Arnould's identification of this code centered on farmers letting customers know they did not use synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. The food was "pure", the environment in which the food was grown was "pure", the farmer and family were on the side of the consumer, and provided a "direct answer to the ills of society caused by industrialization" (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 180). The "idea" was that by purchasing the vegetables from the farm, the shareholder would be participating in the "self-renewing and regenerative processes that happen on the farm" (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 180).

From the shareholders' perspective this code takes on a little bit different idea. The produce being grown without the use of pesticides and insecticides is really taken for granted. If the shareholder is paying for a CSA share, they expect food to be raised without chemical inputs. For shareholders the separation from filth and pollution element was part of knowing where their food came from and recognizing the personal effort expended to grow their food.

Marla was well aware of the choice she was making. She knew she could get organic from the grocery store, but she did not want that product. She wanted vegetables grown by a farmer who really cared about the land and the environment. She said, "Even though I can get organic from _____'s and each piece is wrapped in plastic – YUCK! You can see the values, the ethic, the reason behind organic is not there. They are just supplying it [organic] because there is a demand." In previous years Marla picked up her share on the farm because she said she liked seeing the farmers in the fields and she liked being out in the country. She said she liked knowing the kind of attention and care that went into how her vegetables were raised.

From Marla this code, separation from filth and pollution, was less a physical thing and more psychological. She said she understood the amount of work that went into farming and she liked knowing she was "contributing to" the lives of farmers. When I ventured to say something

about the farmers, in many cases, barely making enough money to get by, she immediately cut me off. She said the farmers were doing what they loved to do and they probably would not want to do anything else. The separation from filth and pollution was important, but for Marla it was something for which there appeared to be a significant amount of price sensitivity.

For Maggie from Township Farm the movie *Food, Inc.* made her want to do something different. Even though she thought about joining a CSA before she had not done anything about it until she saw the movie. Now after three years as a CSA member, she was devoted to the idea of knowing the fields where her vegetables were grown and the knowing farmer who raised the vegetables she was eating.

Betty from Neighborhood Farm cited the mission of the farm as something important to her. This “separation from filth and pollution” was a psychological separation from industrial food production. But it was not only the abstinence from chemicals and pesticides for Betty it was also the ideology of the farm. Betty said, “This woman is pretty honest and the mission of the farm, if there is a mission, is important to me.” It seemed Betty was interviewing the farmers even more than she was evaluating the vegetables.

It was important to Betty to be working with a farm from which no animals were sold. She said she knew some farms raised chickens and sold eggs and meat chickens to subsidize their farm, but Betty did not want to buy vegetables from a farm selling any animal products. Betty’s statement surprised me because I knew the CSA farm from which she had purchased a share the previous two years raised meat chickens and yet she retained her membership with that farm for two years.

Consistent with Press and Arnold’s (2011) identification of the separation from filth and pollution code on the farm websites, this code was echoed back by shareholders. It was not

always in representations as physical as Press and Arnould (2011) cited, but it was definitely a pastoralist factor in shareholders' CSA participation. In terms of marketing, this psychological factor is just as important as the physical representations in the process of marketplace legitimization. Humphreys (2010) described market legitimacy as "a process in which multiple stakeholders contend to shape the social world" (p. 14).

Often, according to Humphreys (2010), legitimization "just happens" (p. 14). But it does not happen without the influence and engagement of social actors outside the particular marketplace (Humphreys, 2010). In other words, the influence of outside factors may positively or negatively impact a marketplace. It would stand to reason that nationwide episodes of salmonella contamination in spinach and peanut butter (Martin, 2009) worked as outside social actors to give community supported agriculture a big "nudge" toward market legitimacy.

Code 2: The Middle Landscape. The idea of the middle landscape, where wilderness and civilization meet, is an integral part of pastoralist ideology. The image of the farmer working with nature is one of those "nice" ideas society uses to negotiate the conflict between what industrialization and growth are doing to nature and what society would like nature to be (Marx, 1964). Press and Arnould (2011) represented this code on farm websites as recalling "the frontier myth, that is, the bold yeoman taming unfamiliar land" (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 182). In addition, on the websites this middle landscape was also a place where farmers touted their connection to the land and their belief in the future of their grandchildren (Press & Arnould, 2011).

The shareholders I interviewed never "voiced" the "yeoman-farmer" idea, but they valued the connection they had with the farmer, and one can assume by proxy, their connection to the land. Two shareholders said they liked the CSA because they were learning about the

seasonality of food and how nature impacts what shows up in their boxes each week. One shareholder said after being a CSA member when she listened to the weather forecast she related it to what would be showing up in her CSA share. She said,

Some years we have great tomatoes because it was warm at the right time and the next year the lettuce will just go on and on because the spring is cool. So you start making a connection between what is happening outside and the food we are getting. That is one thing that we like about it [CSA] too.

Several shareholders talked about giving their children a better idea about where their food comes from. For Brandy from Neighborhood Farm, exposing her daughters to “growing and the whole concept of where food comes from” was the main reason she joined the CSA. The You Pick option was particularly important to Brandy because she wanted her children to have the experience of picking the fruit and vegetables.

“I really like the You Pick. I want my kids to experience this. ‘This is what it looks like when it is ripe...see how easily you can pick it from the vine? See the pretty flowers? Oh see, this is what basil looks like.’ If someone is just going to put my vegetables in a box then I will just schedule a farmers market visit because then I can go and choose what I want. I want to go to where they actually farm.

For Betty the “You Pick” herbs and flowers at Neighborhood Farm made her nervous at first. She was afraid that she might pick too much, but she said the farmers showed her what to do and she loved it! In some ways the You Pick option empowered her. Even though she said her cousins were conventional farmers and she knew and understood the uncertainties of farming, seeing her food growing near her own apartment made her feel good about “seeing the whole process played out” over the summer.

These urban farms redefine the “middle landscape” by bringing the farming activities into the city. Betty and other shareholders saw human-scale fields and human-scale labor as it applied to their own food. The pastoral ideals were reinforced. In some ways, however, it may be less beneficial than one would hope for wilderness or nature as we know it. Seeing food growing in the urban environment may make efforts to save wilderness and farmland appear to be of less importance. If food can be grown in an empty lot across from an apartment building, why worry about disappearing farmland and wilderness?

At this point there is still opposition between nature and the cultivated landscape. It is within this middle landscape that we find community supported agriculture. In reality, all farms are destructive to the original natural landscape and the modern monoculture crop system is the worst. “Agriculture, closely related to global deforestation, by making room for expanding cropping systems, is the most environmentally abusive activity perpetuated by the human species” (Shephard, 1996, p. 181).

The destruction of the middle landscape is speeding up today because of the high prices offered for commodity crops and the willingness of farmers to plow up any available land for row crops (Neuman, 2011). One additional factor, according to Neuman (2011), is the high number of farmers who rent instead of own the farmland. Farmers who rent are less familiar with the land and the risks of erosion. They are also less invested in the long term conservation of the soil (Neuman, 2011). This makes the preservation versus the expansion of the middle landscape of even greater importance in the preservation of the natural wilderness.

Code 3: Fears and Risks. Press and Arnould (2011) identified this code on farm websites by farmers talking about risks of the conventional food system and presenting themselves as a solution to these risks. Of the farms in my study only one website directly

addressed this issue. The shareholders, on the other hand, expressed a deep level of trust and reliance on their farmer to provide them with food that was both healthy and fresh. The safety of the food was something they took for granted

Kris, a shareholder with Township Farm, said she was a gardener herself, but she did not have time for gardening anymore. She said she liked having access to fresh produce “knowing that I can trust the source.” I asked Kris if she would continue with Township Farm if Jeffrey decided to sell all of his vegetables to a middleman and her CSA box would come from the middleman instead of directly from Jeffrey. She said she did not think she would continue with the CSA under those conditions. “I like to be able to talk to the source and [I like] knowing who I am with [where the food is coming from].”

Kris also liked the amount of information about the vegetables that she received from Jeffrey. “Like if there is a bounty of something one year and if there is trouble with the crop I like to know why” she said. Being able to track the crops this way throughout the summer made Kris feel like she really knew what was happening with her food.

Lynn, a shareholder with Township Farm, also liked the idea of knowing where her food came from. When I asked her what she would do if Jeffrey sold all his vegetables to a middleman, thereby almost guaranteeing she would not have to worry about any crop failures, she did not hesitate. She said she would find another CSA. “I am not a fan of trucking in somebody else’s lettuce. If there is a failure of one of the veggies that is life and I should not have access to it.” She said her relationship with Jeffrey was important to her. “I would be really bummed not to see him sitting under the tent [for her on-farm pickup].”

Maggie, another shareholder from Township Farms had a different response to the question about selling vegetables to a middleman. She hesitated, but said she would probably

continue with same CSA because she trusted Jeffrey would “hook up with a good local organization.” Of course, she said if it is a more corporate organization it would require more scrutiny and she would be more concerned about the carbon footprint if vegetables were being trucked in. But, overall she said, “I would trust my farmer to make the decision.”

Even though there was not overt discussion about the perils and risks involved with industrial food, there was a great deal of trust and confidence in the farmer providing the food. This trust and confidence is particularly important to the CSA farmer because this trust is a result of the fears and risks involved with industrial food. This trust contributes to the legitimization of community supported agriculture in the food marketplace. Baudrillard (1998) said we define things by what they are not. To wit CSAs would not exist if the industrial food complex was something in which consumers trusted. By not being industrial food, CSAs become the alternative for which some consumers are searching.

By focusing on the idea that shareholders can “trust” the vegetables they receive from the CSA, farmers are in the first stage of market creation or legitimization as defined by Humphreys (2010). By choosing specific themes or ideas and using amplification to “emphasize one set of meanings over others” (Humphreys, 2010, p. 15), the farmers can promote their vegetables as a solution to the fears and risks engendered by the current industrial food system.

Code 4: Moral Superiority. Press and Arnould (2011) identified this code in how the farmers demonstrated their moral superiority in their opposition to the industrial food system. Farm websites highlight how farms are sustaining the “community-based middle landscape that is superior to factory farms and big agriculture where utilitarian values prevail” (Press & Arnould, 2011, p. 185). This idea of moral superiority was not ever verbally touted by the shareholders in my interviews, but it was expressed in the actions of some of the shareholders.

Kaari, a shareholder of Classic Lake Farm, went back to her church, a drop site for Classic Lake Farm, and became an activist in implementing sustainable food initiatives and promoting community supported agriculture at the church. Being on the organizing committee for a community-wide forum about climate change Karri was in a position to talk about the environmental impact of community supported agriculture. She contacted Classic Lake Farm and asked them to participate at the forum. She said “the CSA option will be really good here because this kind of food production protects the environment.” In addition she also talked about connecting the church’s 30-unit immigrant housing facility with Classic Lake Farm as a market for some of the produce the could not find a market for during the past CSA season.

As mentioned before, Kaari was very excited about promoting community supported agriculture, but she was also distressed because some of the people in her church community had labeled her and others involved with the CSA movement as a “club.” The label, however, points to the idea that others in the church community did not appreciate the enthusiasm or moral superiority the discussion about environmentalism and community supported agriculture engendered.

Maggie, on the other hand, was also a big promoter of community supported agriculture. By bringing her CSA vegetables and fruit to work “show off” to other people, she took advantage of the opportunity to tell them about “our farm.” She said she had “turned a lot of people on to CSAs,” even arranging for her farmer to make a presentation at her workplace. This kind of enthusiasm indicated a real belief and certainty that to the uninitiated may translate as “moral superiority.”

Although the moral superiority can be hard to define, it is not something the uninitiated find hard to identify. Press and Arnould (2011) expressed it this way:

This passionate call to action asserts the morality of responsibility not only to the land, but also to past and future generations. As with earlier incarnations of American pastoralism, individuals are encouraged to judge themselves and others in relationship to this moral universe. (p. 185)

Having myself been on both ends of the moral superiority spectrum with regard to community supported agriculture, I recognize both the unbridled enthusiasm and the uncomfortable dismissal the enthusiasm can produce. The moral superiority code can impact community supported agriculture both negatively and positively. For active CSA participants it is a “win-win” proposition. In terms of recruiting new CSA members, even if CSAs are legitimized in terms of the marketplace, the moral superiority code can discourage or even repel potential customers.

Code 5: Small Communities. Press and Arnould (2011) identified community as a place where shareholders find relief from the busyness and stress of urban life and spend time with fellow shareholders in the middle landscape of the CSA farm. This is the “community” ideal that Press and Arnould (2011) recognized in their study of farm websites. The websites were selling this impression as part of pastoralist ideology. I did not find that to be true on the websites of the farms in my study. The functioning websites of the farms in my study were primarily informational and not actively “selling” the idea of the farm being a community center. Community, however, was an important element to CSA shareholders. The shareholder community, however, was in a different format than I expected to find.

It was the idea of community and not the act or actions of community that were important. Out of the 151 returned surveys, 124 shareholders said supporting a local farmer or getting local produce was important in selecting their CSA. This, in and of itself, was an

important statement about community. The shareholders accepted this type of anachronistic relationship with a farmer because they wanted to purchase their food locally. The very act of CSA membership was a statement about the belief in local resources and the preference to sustain and benefit from the actions of local business rather than perpetually submitting themselves to the anonymity of the grocery store.

This was a choice shareholders made for reasons that countermanded the typical capitalistic relationship. The shareholders paid ahead, accepted the vegetables the farmer chose to raise and make available, and picked up the vegetables in a pre-determined time slot. Most of the other studies cited the fresh, organic produce as the most important reason for joining a CSA, (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cone & Kakalioursas 1995; DeLind 2003; Russell & Zapeda 2008) but in my study fresh, organic produce came in a close second (104 out of 151 surveys).

The community that was important to the CSA shareholder appeared to be a larger non-participatory community. First, the CSA purchase was a local purchase and this type of local purchase meant more money would be staying in the local community (Civic Economics, 2004, p. 5). This strengthens the larger community.

In addition to the economics, shareholders frequently expressed the idea that their CSA purchase was good for the environment and this, in turn, is also good for the larger community. The perception of the environmental and ecological superiority of CSAs should not be taken for granted. A 2008 USDA-sponsored study done by the University of Minnesota found that even though locally-raised produce does travel fewer miles, the larger loads and logistical efficiencies of large supply chains create greater fuel efficiency per unit of product (King et al., 2010).

What community supported agriculture provides to consumers is a combination of economic, ideological, and cultural features that use anti-globalization feelings to the benefit of

the small local organic farmer (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b). The idea of pastoralist ideology merged with what Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) called “a resource for consumers to co-produce feelings of enchantment” (p. 278). This idea of enchantment in terms of ethical consumerism was first introduced by Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) as an explanation for how community supported agriculture has managed to survive and thrive in today’s wildly competitive marketplace.

The CSA model addresses the disenchantment consumers face with the existing globalized food system by focusing on the “romantic idealizations of local farms and personalized relations with the farmers” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b, p. 281). In other words, the farms are using the ideas of American pastoralism. Pastoralism, however, is not the only feature of the CSA model that creates this idea of ethical enchantment, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) also cited the element of surprise and culinary challenges offered with the opening of the CSA delivery box every week. This element of surprise countermanded the mechanization and de-skilled food practices in today’s grocery and fast food outlets (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b).

In addition to the surprise element, there was also the “small scale” farming where farmers have a chance to deal with individual plants rather than the industrialized harvest of most foodstuffs available in the grocery store. Jackie, the farmer from Urban Farm, talked about dealing with “each individual pepper plant.” In addition, instead of arriving in sanitized, plastic packaging, vegetables from the farm arrive in their “real” state. Just like Marla, one of the Classic Lake shareholders, was talking about when she said she knew she could get organic produce all wrapped in plastic from the grocery store, but she did not want that.

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) also suggested that adding to the idea of ethical enchantment was the idea of “sharing” engendered in CSAs’ propensity in “delivering more supply than households actually demand” (p. 287). This, they said, encouraged households to share or barter the excess produce with neighbors, thus delivering on the idea of community within the shareholder’s immediate neighborhood. This idea of sharing with friends, neighbors, and family was brought up several times during my interviews with shareholders. One of my friends discontinued her CSA membership but missed her membership the next year because she liked talking to her neighbors while trying to give away her extra vegetables.

All these images combined to enhance the idea of community, but this is not necessarily a geographical community or a participatory community. This kind of community in some ways connects with the idea of Brand Community as identified by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001). This brand community is facilitated by what Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) defined as mass media in 2001 and what we now call social media.

Brand Community. Even though one often thinks of community primarily as a location or place, most frequently rural, the development of mass media and technology has morphed the idea of community into something virtual. Mass media can now simulate all of the hallmarks of geographic community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). If mass media, and now social media, can simulate community it becomes significantly simpler to create a CSA community without the community members actually meeting. What creates the “brand community” is the act of consumption. The center of the community is a product, a purchase, a mutual interest (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001).

Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) said these brand communities are legitimate communities unique to the particular life span of the product. The use of mass media [and now social media]

allows community members to imagine fellow community members and eliminates the geographical restrictions on the idea of community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). With the use of email, websites and other social media, it is possible for farmers to communicate with shareholders on a daily basis. So even if the shareholders do not have time to actually participate in community activities, social media allows the farmer to make shareholders feel as if they know what is actually happening on the farm.

What are Farmers Really Selling? Per the responses to my shareholder survey, the idea of community is the most important thing to shareholders, even more important than the vegetables themselves. This raises the question as to what the CSA farmers are actually selling. Is it vegetables, American pastoralism, or is it an idea, a simulation of community? Society is losing the ability to distinguish between the simulation and what is real (Baudrillard, 1983). The purchases we make are influenced as much by what the products represent as by what is actually being purchased (Baudrillard, 1983).

Perhaps community supported agriculture raises the possibility of somehow arresting, or slowing down the simulation as we speed toward hyper-reality. Community supported agriculture provides a platform for consumers to turn away from the highly competitive industrialized food market and choose instead, vegetables raised by a farmer with whom they have a relationship in which trust and community are a part of the package. Community supported agriculture gives consumers a chance to experience “food with a farmer’s face” (Schnell, 2007).

Is the idea of brand community really a part of community supported agriculture? Does a “community” really exist as part of social media? Some would say “Yes.” I attended a session devoted to social media at a CSA Conference sponsored by the Farmer’s Union. The presenter

made it sound like Facebook and social media were the only way to successfully communicate with shareholders.

Social Media and Community Supported Agriculture. As mentioned earlier, the farms in my study had Facebook pages. Two farms updated their Facebook page at least once per day and the remaining farms posted two or three times per week. Is this communication an important part of community-building? If so, what kind of community is being built? Is this the environment for the “brand community” Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) talked about?

At the CSA Conference the CSA Farmer Presenter said, “The singular goal of using Facebook is to build relationships, to cultivate connections between you and your customers.” This farmer’s rule for posting was to “Post at least once per day. Evening is the best time” she said, “after they [the shareholders] are home from work. Otherwise it [your post] will be lost.” For this woman and her husband, the Facebook page made them feel less isolated and also gave their shareholders a virtual glimpse into what was happening on the farm every day. “This is a connection between our farm and our customers” the Farmer/Presenter said. “Seeing the [shareholder] comments really bolsters our spirits.”

Since most of the business end of CSA sign-ups and payment happens via the internet, it is very possible the farmer would never meet her shareholders. The farmer was thrilled by some of the Facebook comments left by shareholders. The Farmer/Presenter said after coming to one of the farm events, one of the shareholders posted on her Facebook page, “When I finally met [the farmers] I felt like I had known them forever.” Another shareholder posted, “They are *our* farmers!” These kinds of positive comments and feedback were really important to this farmer and she said the interactive communication between the shareholder and farmer went a long way toward the goal of community-building.

My survey results, however, did not jibe with this farmer's representations about Facebook and social media communication. Admittedly the subset of CSA members responding to my survey (151 out of approximately 290) represented a very small segment of the CSA shareholder population, however, more than half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I follow my farmer on Facebook or Twitter." Several of the respondents even took the time to add a comment to that question saying they did not have a Facebook or Twitter account. Taking this into consideration, farmers should be aware of the possibility of creating a social media echo chamber in which they only hear themselves and the shareholders who actively participate.

The most frequently expressed concern about the social media echo chamber is that it will skew the perception of what is really happening. Martin (2013) said the "internet glosses over life's ambiguities with false certainty, and we do little to search out these important grey areas" (para. 1). The shareholder not participating in social media may have some important contributions that will be lost if the farmer relies only on the interactive options available with Facebook and Twitter. "If you surround yourself with voices that echo similar opinions to those you're feeding out, they will be reinforced in your mind as mainstream, to the point that it can distort your perception of what is the general consensus" (Martin, 2013, para. 5)

In Summary

In the end, the pastoralist ideology of CSA websites used by Press and Arnould (2011) to explain the evolution of CSAs, links with Tönnies's concepts of *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* and Baudrillard's theory of simulation and hyper-reality. The importance of the idea of community and nostalgia, both major factors in American pastoralism, is also instrumental in explaining the application of Tönnies's and Baudrillard's theories.

Tönnies: Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft, and CSAs. Pastoralism, as defined by Marx (1964), has an, albeit unconscious, influence on many of the people involved in community supported agriculture, whether farmers or shareholders. The sentimental, “mass culture” (Marx, 1964, p. 7) version of pastoralism reflects a yearning for something simpler, an idyllic and somewhat disingenuous desire to exist with “nature.” This yearning for an “ideal” that does not exist is similar to the idealized version of Tönnies’s concept of Gemeinschaft or community. This ideal harkens back to a time when family and community were the most important underpinnings of society. Both ideals, pastoralism and Gemeinschaft, although perceived as perfection, only exist in settings of nostalgia, longing, and imagination.

The confluence of pastoralism and America’s love affair with technology does not take into account the destruction and violence visited upon wilderness and nature by industrialization and technology. The sentimental yearning for a simpler time and an existence with nature is at best an image of something for which to strive, but not a scenario in which the “mass culture” could live. Identifying the balance between wilderness and development, the point at which industrial progress ceases to be progress and becomes destructive, has always eluded society (Marx, 1964). But this sentimental pastoralist yearning allows society to have it both ways. “It [pastoralism] enabled the nation to continue defining its purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth, and power” (Marx, 1964, p. 226).

In the case of Gemeinschaft the middle landscape is the space between the ultimate Gemeinschaft and the ultimate Gesellschaft. Just as there is no defined tipping point when industrial progress ceases to be progress in terms of the depletion and destruction of nature (Marx, 1964), so there is no predetermined “set point” at which the movement from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft ceases to be in the best interests of the community. However,

according to Tönnies, (1955) this evolution of Gemeinschaft emerging from Gesellschaft and Gesellschaft emerging from Gemeinschaft is an ongoing process. The question is at what point the evolution of Gesellschaft will completely overtake the Gemeinschaft?

Just as with pastoralism where the greater society enjoys the conveniences of technology while ignoring the social and environmental costs, so too society idealizes community while embracing individuality and personal independence without recognizing the toll individualism extracts in terms of community. As Marx (1964) observed, the industry society wants, destroys nature even though nature is what society says it regards as important. The same is true of Gemeinschaft, the individualism society wants, destroys the community society regards as important.

Finally, Press and Arnould's (2011) small community code is the definition of Gemeinschaft in and of itself. In terms of the yearning and nostalgia associated with pastoralism, there is not a significant difference between this code and Gemeinschaft. In both cases, however, it is the fantastical idea and not the actual reality that is important to the shareholder. Examining the reality of pastoralism and Gemeinschaft, in many cases, would make these concepts unacceptable to mainstream society.

This is where the middle landscape once again comes into play as the idea of community is used to "sell" CSA shares. In other words, the Gemeinschaft ideals of community are used to sell in the Gesellschaft marketplace. The codes Press and Arnould (2011) say farmers have used to legitimate themselves in the marketplace are all Gemeinschaft ideals and these ideals are being used for commercial purposes. Tönnies (1955) said a "commercial Gemeinschaft" was not possible (p. 38). And yet, the middle landscape of community supported agriculture, between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft appears to currently be accommodating both Gemeinschaft and

Gesellschaft concepts. This will last at least until the undefined tipping point where one overpowers the other.

One could say the CSA model is the result of the implosion and failure of Gesellschaft. Community supported agriculture may be consumers' pushback to the industrialization and anonymity of the current food system. This step back from the total Gesellschaft into the less anonymous and less industrialized CSA model moves back into the middle landscape between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. This middle landscape may have begun as the temporary sanctuary from food commercialization, but the Gemeinschaft yearnings are fertile ground for a potential Gesellschaft sales job especially as the CSA model gains market legitimacy and turns into a potential revenue source for industrial food advocates.

Baudrillard: Pastoralism and Simulation. Community supported agriculture may represent a slowdown of the careening simulation of food, consumption, and capitalism. The codes presented by Press and Arnould (2011) all represent "ideas" or sign-values being used to sell the concept of community supported agriculture as represented by a box of vegetables. These codes feed into the idealization of community supported agriculture as a simulation of the way things used to be when the world was simpler and choices more limited. These idealized representations go a long way to describing the pastoralist ideology and middle landscape concepts that are part of the American psyche (Marx, 1964).

Applying Baudrillard's (1998) concept of simulation Press and Arnould's (2011) codes translate into sign-values. Knowing the consumer can obtain fresh, organic vegetables through other channels, one must assume there is something in the purchase of a CSA share that is more than just the vegetables. Baudrillard called this a "social logic or the logic of desire, for which

they [the vegetables] function as a shifting and unconscious field of signification” (1998, p. 77). In other words the CSA purchase represents something more.

One of the unique things about the CSA business model is the opportunity offered to consumers to break away from the “convenience-oriented, technologically mediated foodways (e.g. McDonalized fast food, prepackaged microwavable meals, and the global chasm existing between producers and consumers)” (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007b, p. 281). The CSA choice, somewhat lacking in flexibility and convenience, is made by thousands of consumers every year. The vegetables are ostensibly the product, but Baudrillard would say what is being purchased is an idea, not a product.

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli described the purchase of a CSA share as an ethical consumer choice melding the “ideological critique of global corporate capitalism with the romanticized idealizations of rural communities as bastions of moral virtues.” (2007b, p. 277). The consumer is buying the ideas (or codes) associated with community supported agriculture and this is what gives community supported agriculture the potential to arrest the food simulation. The irony is that just as there is no defined tipping point for the Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft continuum, there is no defined tipping point for the CSA simulation.

To effectively slow the simulation and change the way society consumes or thinks about food, CSAs need to increase their visibility and market share. These “strategies” to promote one’s standing in the marketplace require CSAs to participate in the very simulation they are trying to change by further commoditizing the ideas or codes Press and Arnould (2011) identified. The potential good community supported agriculture stands to create in terms of food and the environment appears to require the destruction and overpowering of the very elements community supported agriculture promotes.

The possibility of community supported agriculture arresting the food simulation involves much of what Marx described as simple pastoralism, a “symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity” (1964, p. 9). This same movement is part of the allure of community supported agriculture. The challenge, however, is when unchecked, these symbolic movements away from civilization and sophistication turn into a melancholy “perversion of thought and feeling” (Marx, 1964, p. 10). This unfulfilled yearning, if not directed to greater purpose becomes a simple escape from reality (Marx, 1964).

These same feelings of simple pastoralism applied to community supported agriculture have potential to channel something greater. Community supported agriculture offers opportunities for consumers to make a different choice in how they will participate in the marketplace. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli saw the potential for the relationships between CSA farmers and shareholders to provide cultural insights into how the ideals of ethical consumerism can be recreated in a way that was both “more emotionally engaging and experientially captivating” (2007b, p. 299).

Whether you are looking at community supported agriculture through the nineteenth century lens of Ferdinand Tönnies or the twentieth century lens of Jean Baudrillard or the twenty-first century lens of Press and Arnould, community is an essential, though not always obvious, necessity. Even in the nineteenth century Tönnies recognized that communities evolve and recreate themselves with changes in technology and industrial enhancements. Tönnies saw the evolution of *Gemeinschaft* and Baudrillard saw the speeding up of the simulation. In both cases, the desire for individuality and differentiation were the most persuasive and influential elements in the decreasing importance of community.

What the Social Theory Did Not Say. The social theories of Tönnies and Baudrillard offer a relatively comprehensive description for many aspects of society today. Early in my writing process, however, I recognized that writing about community supported agriculture required resources outside the realm of my selected social theorists. The farmers, with their “willingness to do what is necessary without complaint” (Groh & McFadden, 2000, p. 8) did not “fit” into the social theory of Tönnies and Baudrillard. These social theories did not talk about satisfaction or contentment or, one might say, happiness.

Tönnies, in his 1922 addendum to his original 1877 *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* transcript, did foresee the recreation of *Gemeinschaft* out of the plunder of *Gesellschaft*, but only after social unrest and chaos from class conflict. Baudrillard predicted nothing apart from the continuation and exacerbation of the simulation into hyperreality. In that context, what could I do with the CSA farmers? Where did the CSA farmer fit in these social theories?

Sennett (2008), Pink (2009), and Dunn and Norton (2013) all suggested elements that contributed to the happiness and satisfaction of individuals. Happy individuals make community possible. Since community is largely a voluntary construction, to the extent possible communities should be advised to draw on the elements of craftsmanship (Sennett, 2008), motivation (Pink, 2009) and “happy money” (Dunn & Norton, 2013) to create an ambiance or feeling that makes the individuals in the community feel good.

Through community supported agriculture one sees the concept of community coming back as an important element in society. The re-introduced community, however, is a different type of community in which individualism and differentiation, described by Tönnies and Baudrillard as the destroying forces of community are, to a certain extent, built into the new community structure. This new community does not require the same type of commitment or

time. This community, whether a social media community, brand community, or actual physical community, is now a voluntary association of individuals designed to encompass and make possible the good feelings of community without the requirements of time and energy commitments.

Despite the rewards of this new community, community supported agriculture farmers still face the small business challenges of today's capitalist culture and community alone does not pay the bills or meet all of those challenges. Even though the CSA farmer has the advantages of social media that allow them to promote a picture, image, or idea of community, the community built from this commercial *Gemeinschaft* may or may not be enough to sustain the CSA business model. Despite the market and capitalist forces, however, the ideas and concepts of community present a necessary and ever-changing part of who we are and how we live.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This phenomenological study looked at the idea of community from the perspective of the shareholders and farmers in their experience of community supported agriculture. The idea of community can take on many different guises, especially today when the idea of community is being embraced by many different organizations to create a sense of belonging and connection. In many cases, however, community is something we only recognize in its absence (Cobb, 1996). For purposes of my study, I selected the description of community defined by Cobb (1996) as collections of individuals that share a common place, interest, or lifestyle.

Cobb (1996) listed three characteristics of community all of which are reflected in the CSA model. The first characteristic of mutual responsibility is found in the shareholders' prepayment or loan to the farmer for the vegetables to be delivered in the summer. Often, payment is made before any seeds are planted. By accepting this payment, the farmers accept the responsibility of delivering, to the best of their ability, vegetables and produce during the summer. This mutual responsibility or trust corresponds to what Tönnies (1955) described as a *Gemeinschaft* in a business relationship. There is a high degree of trust and responsibility engendered in this transaction.

The second characteristic of community according to Cobb (1996) is the ability to self-identify as a member of the community. This characteristic is relatively self-selecting. The shareholder joins the community when the payment for future vegetables is made and the farmer sustains the community with the delivery of vegetables. Membership in this community is easy to understand.

Finally, Cobb's (1996) third characteristic of community is participation in the life of the community and, to some extent, the decisions made within the community. Although the farmer-

driven CSAs of my study, and the Midwest in general, are more limited in the opportunities provided to shareholders to participate in the decision making processes, the results of my study indicate willingness and desire on the part of the farmers to respond to shareholder feedback and comments. The farmers' willingness to listen and respond, in at least two situations pleased the shareholders and enhanced the shareholders' commitment to the farm.

This community, although important to the farmers for their financial survival, does not draw only on financial survival as a motivation. The attitude and motivation of the farmers in my study resulted from the farmers' occupational contentment and, in some cases, a sense of delight and happiness that communicated itself to the shareholders as a commitment to their best interests. This commitment strengthened the relationship between the farmers and shareholders and, as a result, strengthens the community.

But, whether instigated by the farmers' commitment to farming or by nostalgic and pastoralist inclinations of society, this kind of community finds a comfortable "growing place" in the CSA venue. For the shareholders and farmers in my study the ideals of community supported agriculture were genuine and the good feelings induced by the CSA experience were an important part of growing the community. However, the commitment is not to a participatory community. The commitment, in many cases, appears to be to a "feel good" idea of community.

This commitment to an idea opens up an opportunity for a different kind of community. This commitment brings the idea of "brand community" to the fore (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). These on-line communities converge around a brand or preferred retail product. Community members feel a connection not only to the brand or product but also toward each other, even if they have never met (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). The commitment to a brand, or in the case of CSA, to a farm, creates an opportunity for a virtual community built around the farm. This

community, although important to the farm is again another nonparticipatory community, but a community that can engender commitment because it feels good.

Embracing the idea of a “feel good” community is not something to be denigrated or discounted. Both shareholders and farmers put something of themselves into this relationship and community that required time, effort, and resulted in loyalty. This commitment, when viewed through the lenses of three different theorists from three different centuries, suggests authenticity and pretense, realism and nostalgia, and a future that is both hopeful and hopeless at the same time.

Conclusions

Guided by my research and analysis I developed three conclusions that apply to the experience of community in community supported agriculture: 1) Community in community supported agriculture is an individualistic experience. 2) There are potential personality similarities between CSA farmers and shareholders that could be capitalized upon to more accurately address needs and/or desires of shareholders and, potentially build more reliable long-term relationships. 3) Social media, although it has the potential to be an important tool for maintaining and communicating with shareholders or building community, should not be used exclusively yet. Following is a discussion of these conclusions.

Community is an Individualistic Experience. The idea of community is part of the community supported agriculture model, but the concept of community displayed itself differently than I expected. The commitment of the shareholders to the farmer and the farmer to the shareholders is there and stronger than I anticipated. But the commitment is not a commitment to the actual tight knit familial community of yesterday or *Gemeinschaft* with its unique responsibilities and expectations. In other words, the “natural will” described by Tönnies

(1955) that allows the continuation of *Gemeinschaft* to be taken for granted is not part of the CSA community. The CSA community is more committed to the “idea” of the tight knit familial community, not the actual commitment or expectations of such a community. The idea of community that developed in my study is an individualistic idea. It feels good, or it is in the individual’s best interests to support or maintain the community.

I first became aware of the individualistic slant to the shareholder experience as I looked at the idea of shareholder loyalty. As with any capitalistic purchase, it is difficult to consider consumer or shareholder loyalty being a significant factor outside the realm of experience and “good feeling.” The shareholders I interviewed were excited to tell me about their experience. They were really happy to talk about their farm, farmer, family, and the vegetables.

But the shareholders I interviewed primarily talked about their experience and how they felt, the vegetables were secondary. Many of them commented on the new vegetables that were part of their CSA experience. They said they were glad to be eating such fresh vegetables or feeding their family such good vegetables, but it was how they felt about what they were doing or eating or feeding to their families that was important. If they had purchased those same vegetables at the grocery store or farmers market, I doubt the enthusiasm or excitement would have been there. These vegetables came directly from the farm. These vegetables were special. But the vegetables themselves had nothing to do with community.

The idea of community supported agriculture is a sort of throwback to the way things used to be or at least the way people like to think things used to be. It is a pastoral idea of a time when people knew their neighbors and when people were raising their own food or, if they did not raise their own food, at least they knew who raised the food they were eating. The CSA

community allows people to recreate this community ideal, in a way that more easily meshes with the busy lifestyles and 24-hour online living common today.

For the shareholder. The CSA community is, in many respects, a virtual community. With the CSA vegetables there is the opportunity for the shareholder to slow down and make something with their hands, to craft something “real”, like mom and grandma used to do. The shareholder can feel good about knowing the food on their plates comes from a place where everyone really cares about how the food was grown and harvested. This is what makes the vegetables special.

The investment in the local CSA farmer pays for this “feel good” feeling of supporting and sustaining a local farm and farmer. The farmer feels good about raising the produce and the shareholder feels good about supporting the farmer. The vegetables that are the basis for this relationship are grown in a way the shareholder perceives as good for the environment, good for the community, and good for themselves.

Amanda, the young mother from Township Farm said she lived so far away it took most of an afternoon to pick up her share. She left her first, more conveniently-located CSA because the farmer did not recognize her or remember her name from week to week and that farmer did not have the time to talk. Because she did not “feel good” about her first CSA, Amanda was willing to drive the longer distance to get to Township Farm. She loved it because Jeffrey remembered her name and talked to her.

For this young mother communication was the most important thing in her relationship with her farmer. This was her “individual” experience. Obviously the experience of communication does not lead to “community” in a straight line. However, good communication

builds the foundation for community because it “feels good” when someone listens and being listened to makes it much easier to be committed.

Even though Marla from Classic Lake Farm did not appreciate many of the unusual vegetables, she found the CSA experience to be heart-warming. It made her feel good to drive out to the farm and see the fields. Brandy from Neighborhood Farm was disappointed because in her second year with the CSA she only saw her farmer from the previous year one time. She said she felt good because as one of his first shareholders she contributed to his success. Daniel from Classic Lake Farm wished he could change the weather to make the CSA season last longer. In talking about the farm Daniel said he liked the opportunity to connect to their lives and stories. He liked knowing he “counted” when he was doing business with a small farmer.

These feelings are not *because* of community exactly. But these individualistic feelings create and grow a sense of commitment, loyalty, community, and, one might venture, happiness. Dunn and Norton’s (2013) five principles of happy money point to the idea that spending money on others creates a greater sense of happiness than spending money on yourself. “Rather than thinking about different ways you can spend your money on yourself to maximize your own happiness” Dunn and Norton wrote, “consider investing it in others” (2013, p. 107). Spending money on others will bring greater happiness but, they said, “you have to be willing to make yourself a little poorer to reap these benefits” (Dunn & Norton, 2013, p. 107).

In many ways this is what is happening when shareholders pay ahead or invest in their CSA share for the season, they are investing in others. For the shareholders returning surveys supporting a local farmer was the most frequently given reason for their CSA investment, even more frequent than the fresh vegetables and organic produce. The investment induced a good feeling not only because of the support given to the local farmer, but also, possibly, because of

the adherence to Dunn and Norton's (2013) fourth principle of "happy money", "Pay Now, Consume Later."

By making this investment in the "to be delivered in the future" vegetables the shareholder is left with an opportunity to envision what they will receive when the snow melts. The shareholders have time to reinforce the positive aspects of their purchase in their minds. They have something to which they can look forward.

The good feelings that develop as a result of communication and relationship are the building blocks of community. The vegetables create a reason for the shareholder to contribute, and give the farmer, in the words of the farmer from the CSA conference, "*the opportunity*" to deliver an experience of community that provides both farmers and shareholders with a chance to visibly play a part in making life better for someone else. I posit that the idea of supporting the local farmer is an offshoot of the idea of contributing to another person's success and, at the same time, a nostalgic reinforcement of the shareholders' latent ideas of community and pastoralist beliefs.

The shareholder is participating in a group or community to support and sustain a farmer. This farmer is willing to do the hard work and build the ecological framework that allows the shareholders' investment to do as much good as possible within their immediate community space. It is community, but with a non-participatory and an individualistic "feel good" endgame.

About the Experience. Although my interviews revealed this individualistic "feel good" experience of community for both shareholders and farmers, the shareholders expressed the "feel good" experience more directly. By definition the interviews were focused on the shareholders' experiences, but the conversations were not dry discussions of what they did when they picked up their shares or what they did when they looked for new ways to use or store or freeze the

vegetables. The conversations were always about how they felt about the farmer, about the vegetables, about community supported agriculture as an experience. Granted, my interviewees were a self-selected group of shareholders who were willing to talk about their experience, but there was mostly a sense of excitement about the experience.

There was the shareholder who was disappointed she had not convinced any of her friends or neighbors to join her in the CSA experience that was still a delight to her after nine years. There was the shareholder who went back to her church and started trying to organize more CSA participation within her church. There was the shareholder disappointed that she only saw her first-year farmer one time during the second growing season. All of these examples are about “feeling good” about the experience or the farmer, not about feeling good about the vegetables. The vegetables are the vehicle for the good feelings that imbue the vegetables and, by proxy, the CSA experience with “magic.”

For the Farmer. At the same time the shareholders are reveling in the “feel good” payback from their CSA investment, the farmers’ lives, instead of slowing down are speeding up as they plan, plant, weed, harvest, and pack those fresh vegetables. The farmer at the CSA Conference who lamented about not being able to spend time with his own family during the summer because he was too busy in the field at the same time reveled in his quality of life. This quality of life was possible, he said because of his ability to provide shareholders with food that was both fresh and healthy. He was “feeling good” about what he was providing to the families investing in him and his farm.

At the same time he was feeling good about what he was giving to his shareholders, he was “busy.” But it was a different kind of “busy.” This kind of “busy” creates the pleasurable

satisfaction in the accomplishment of a job well-done. This kind of busy is the “oxygen for the soul” described by Pink (2009, p. 127). It “feels good” to do one’s best.

The vegetables for the farmers are the material representation of their craftsmanship. Sennett (2008) cited motivation, because it comes from within, as more important than talent in the development of craftsmanship. In turn, the development of craftsmanship, according to Sennett (2008) is the basis for the development of the ability to govern oneself. Pollan (2013) said the pleasure in producing something physical with our hands is what builds a sense of pride and self-sufficiency. These things are all part of the farmers’ experience as they work to build and strengthen their community and these things “feel good.”

At the same time the community is the farmer’s livelihood and, for the farmers, the means of their survival. However, the act of farming and this idea of community appear to provide the farmer with a sense of satisfaction and contentment that, in and of itself, can be interpreted as an individualistic “feel good” experience. As with the shareholders’ experiences, the farmers’ experiences are not, *selfish* individualistic experiences, they are personal individualistic experiences that engender a sense of contentment and commitment.

This sense of contentment and commitment make the perpetuation of the idea of community on the part of the farmer an almost natural offshoot of the farmer’s career choice. The farmers’ contentment leaves space in the farmers’ work lives to keep the best interests of their shareholders at the forefront. Keep in mind that Tegmeier and Duffy (2005) found 97% of CSA farmers to be completely satisfied or satisfied most of the time despite the fact that 57% said they were not paid a fair wage. This is not a reflection of today’s capitalistic society.

This individualistic approach combined with keeping the best interests of the “other” in mind melds Tönnies’s (1955) ideas of “natural will” and “rational will” in a way that is unique.

The “natural will” that looks back to the past and lives for the conservation and continuation of the community, is reflected in the farmers’ commitment to the health and well-being of their shareholders. The “rational will”, defined by rules and legal constraints, looks to the future and is softened by the individual shareholders’ willingness to pay in advance for vegetables or, essentially, to loan the farmer startup money for future vegetable deliveries. This advance payment or loan reflects a belief in the ability of the farmer to grow the vegetables, in the commitment of the farmer to the relationship, and a sense of trust in the farmer to fulfill the expectations of the contract. This trust, according to Tönnies (1955) is the defining element of a *Gemeinschaft* relationship.

Tegtmeier and Duffy (2005) found that Midwestern CSA farmers think the vegetables they grow to be the most important thing to their shareholders. Surprisingly with all the topics covered by Tegtmeier and Duffy in their 2005 study, the study never touched on the idea of the relationship as a saleable part of the CSA investment. Yet, in my study it appeared that this is what created the most value for the shareholders. Taking the Baudrillardian (1998) idea that we are buying ideas and not actual products, one can extrapolate that shareholders are not actually buying vegetables. Shareholders are buying the idea and experience of community and relationship with a farmer.

This relationship provides the shareholders with both a nonparticipatory community and the pastoralist experience that is an important part of the American psyche (Marx, 1964). This relationship with the farmer and the good feelings that are part of the CSA milieu are difficult for corporate farms and franchises to replicate. These personal relationships represent a competitive advantage that shareholders are not likely to find in other transactional or *Gesellschaft*

relationships. This brings me to my second conclusion. Perhaps CSA farmers can capitalize on shared personality traits to increase sales and CSA participation.

Farmer and Shareholders: Shared Personality Traits. When I began seriously writing my dissertation I decided I did not have time to go to the grocery store. This was a couple of months before the CSA deliveries would begin so I knew I needed to rely on what was currently in my cupboards and freezer. I lasted two months, only replenishing my supply of eggs and milk. By the end of two months I still had several meals I could have pieced together with the remaining items in my freezer and cupboard, but I had been out of coffee beans too long, so I went to the store.

During those two months each day as I rode my bike to work I was figuring out how I could combine the dry beans left in my cupboard with the frozen vegetables and meat in my freezer to create another meal or two. It was a fun challenge; like putting together the pieces of a puzzle.

One day I realized this challenge was similar to the shareholders' challenge of finding ways to use new or familiar CSA vegetables. From there I realized this vegetable challenge required a kind of craftsmanship similar to the craftsmanship of the CSA farmer. So the CSA farmer and, at least some of the CSA shareholders, share this common characteristic of craftsmanship. That was one possible explanation as to why the shareholders I interviewed were so excited about their CSA experience. The CSA tapped into and required the use of their craftsmanship and imagination. The vegetables from the CSA awakened the shareholders' creativity.

Going back through the comments from the surveys, I found several examples of shareholders using their creativity with the vegetables they received. "If I run out of ideas," one

shareholder wrote, "I pick a region, ex: Indian & prepare veg that week with Indian spices."

Another shareholder was learning how to preserve the vegetables she got from the CSA. "I appreciate the flavorful produce and using items I had never used before. I'm also learning how to preserve and pickle." Sometimes the creativity was important simply to use up everything in the box. "I enjoy being surprised by what's in our box and improvising to make meals so we use up the produce, herbs, etc."

That is the magic in the CSA experience and the vegetables are the bridge for the CSA farmer/shareholder relationship. Without the vegetables, it is doubtful the farmer/shareholder relationship would exist, but without the relationship it is doubtful the shareholder would be as interested in the vegetables. For the committed, long term shareholder the vegetables are secondary to the relationship with the farmer and the "good feelings" the shareholder experiences.

This "good feeling" encompasses not only the relationship, but also the ideals and images, real or imaginary, the shareholder associates with this relationship. Supporting the farmer and the idea of community are part of the "good feeling." However, there is also the element of craftsmanship and artistry that makes up an important, although frequently unexplored, part of the CSA experience. There is an element of craftsmanship for the farmers in planning, planting, harvesting, and delivering the CSA share and there is an element of craftsmanship for the shareholder in working with, preparing and preserving the vegetables in the CSA share.

The shared elements of craftsmanship and motivation as described by Sennett (2008) and Pink (2009) are reflected in the idea of stepping back, slowing down, and creating something "real", something non-electronic or manufactured. This creative element challenges

competencies and gives permission to experiment. Several of the shareholders I interviewed referred to the CSA vegetables as a challenge or surprise. What would they find and what would they do with this week's delivery?

While figuring out how to use and what to do with the vegetables in the box calls upon the creativity and craftsmanship of the shareholder, the same is true for the farmer. While growing anywhere from 50-70 crops per year, the farmer faces the same challenges but on a larger scale. For both farmers and shareholders the intrinsic motivation, the desire to do a good job simply because one can, is an important component of personal contentment and satisfaction (Pink, 2009, Sennett, 2008).

If 97% of CSA farmers describe themselves as completely satisfied or satisfied most of the time even if many of them do not believe they are being paid well enough for their work (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005), there must be a very important element in the farmers' career choice that creates this degree of personal satisfaction. To a large extent this satisfaction is embodied in the idea of craftsmanship and motivation and doing a good job, just because one can.

Since shareholders and farmers share some of the same characteristics with respect to these elements of craftsmanship and motivation, by shifting the focus of marketing materials and advertising to personify these ideas under the guise of vegetable deliveries, farmers may potentially capitalize on the intrinsic motivations (Pink, 2009) of individuals similar to themselves.

Moving the focus. By moving the focus to these similarities instead of the vegetables, farmers may facilitate the creation of communities more closely reflecting their ideal of a committed community. This committed community may eventually even allow the farmer to forego the sales and marketing activities. By focusing on and encouraging consumers most like

themselves in terms of craftsmanship and motivation, the farmer has a better chance of capitalizing on these similarities and creating a community that includes a “feel good” experience for its members.

Attempting to sell CSA shares by focusing on these similarities of personality, at first glance reflects Baudrillard’s theory of simulation because the farmer is selling the ideas of craftsmanship and motivation rather than the actual vegetables. But, in essence, that is happening already. The shareholders are buying an experience or a relationship, not just vegetables. The vegetables are the vehicle by which the farmer appeals to the desires of the shareholders to realize their own, possibly unrealized talents. Baudrillard’s simulation, however, is fueled by the consumer’s quest for differentiation. The entire simulation spiral is possible only because consumers are constantly looking for the next thing to accentuate their own individuality (Baudrillard, 1998).

Attempting to sell CSA shares by using the ideas of craftsmanship and artistry actually reverses the simulation spiral. Instead of moving farther away from the original or real, the CSA purchase actually moves the shareholder back toward the original. Instead of moving toward individuality and differentiation, a CSA shareholder becomes a member of a community, albeit a virtual (or brand) community. It is still a community working as a group to maintain, support, and sustain a farm, a farmer, and a way of life. The result of this group effort, in many cases, is an unintended or unappreciated consequence of the individualistic CSA shareholder experience.

One might say my second conclusion about building community by changing the marketing focus and bringing people together based on their similarities contradicts my first conclusion that community in the CSA milieu is an individualistic, potentially even selfish, experience. Cobb (1996), however, said individuality and community are not mutually

exclusive. “On the contrary” Cobb wrote, “they [individualism and community] constitute a polarity in which neither attains its fulfillment apart from the other” (p. 186). Baudrillard (1998) agreed, saying we define things by what they are not. We need the opposite, according to Baudrillard (1998), to define what we are looking at.

Communities are built because individuals choose to belong. This choice of whether or not to belong to a community is based on how the individual feels or what the individual gets from the community. The strength of a community is determined by how strongly people identify themselves by their membership (Cobb, 1996). By focusing on ideas that resonate with intrinsically motivated individuals, like craftsmanship, the CSA farm may bring like-minded individuals together into a community that is both commercially viable for the farmer and intellectually stimulating for the shareholders.

“Community building is a recurring strategy for consumers who deviate from dominant social norms” according to Coskuner-Balli (2013, p. 201). These “deviant” consumers have similar traits that attract them to countercultural experiences (Coskuner-Balli, 2013). This attraction will create situations in which these individuals will search out spaces in which to build communities where they can share their countercultural experiences (Coskuner-Balli, 2013). To the extent that the community supported agriculture setting represents a countercultural experience for some consumers, there is also a unique opportunity for farmers. This opportunity is a chance for farmers to embellish their existing framework with additional ideas, options, and challenges designed to feed into the countercultural or artisanal constructs shared by both the intrinsically-motivated farmers and shareholders.

Community supported agriculture is business and farmers need to be cognizant not only of their own expenditures and balance sheet, but also the needs, interests, and motivations of

their shareholders. Recognizing and emphasizing these similarities may play an important role in expanding the farmers' subscription base. Obviously the farmers need to be able to communicate their ideals, commitments, and goals to potential shareholders.

The internet has been, and will continue to be, a platform from which the farmer is able to communicate directly with the shareholders and the world. This communication can happen via the farm websites or social media. The website option allows farmers to paint a picture or tell a story that lasts longer and can be more definitively tailored to the farmer's needs. Although social media allows interactive communication between the farmer and shareholders, it is too early for farmers to rely entirely on a single platform for all their communication needs.

Social Media is not Everything...Yet... I attended a social media session at the CSA Conference and the presenter expounded at length about social media to the point of excluding nearly any other possibility of communication or community for CSAs. I was surprised at first and I thought maybe I missed something in the returned surveys. At the time of the conference I had not rigorously analyzed my survey results, but I had taken note of the social media questions because a couple of the shareholders had written comments next to these questions. The social media questions, as I remembered, had not come back with overwhelmingly positive responses. I did not say anything at the time, but I remember the presenter smiling sympathetically at two of the session participants who had not yet set up a Facebook account for their farms.

The first thing I did when I got home was look at the results for the social media questions on my survey. The first statement which was rated on a Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree scale was "I follow my farmer on Facebook or Twitter." To begin with the question should not have been asked this way because it is asking about two things in a single question. However, out of 150 surveys 80 respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with that

statement. Fifty of the respondents said they Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statement. I thought I had proved the Conference presenter wrong because more than 50% of my survey respondents seemed to disagree with her presentation of social media as the only viable communication option for CSAs.

Looking at the survey responses by farm, however, I came up with different results. The Facebook page for Classic Lake Farm was imbedded within the Facebook page of the larger nonprofit organization. So when I searched for Classic Lake Farm I did not get any hits on Facebook. Perhaps, not coincidentally, all of the 60 respondents from Classic Lake Farm Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the Facebook/Twitter question. When I removed the Classic Lake Farm responses to this question, the proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement dropped from more than 50% of respondents to exactly one third or 33% of the responses disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.

One might say this increases the possibility that social media is a required facet of CSA communication. Nearly two-thirds of the shareholders from farms with easily identifiable social media outlets appeared to value social media communication. Or this might raise the possibility that a Facebook or Twitter account is NOT necessary for a successfully functioning CSA. If Classic Lake Farm can operate successfully with nearly half of their 145 members not following the farm on Facebook or Twitter, are these modes of social media actually necessary or are they simply enhancements to the existing modes of communication already available for farms that use them?

There is no doubt that the internet is transforming community supported agriculture. What was once a countercultural opportunity to purchase fresh vegetables from a local farmer is available to nearly anyone with access to the internet. Although some farmers still do

“advertise” with leaflets, brochures, and posters, most CSA shareholders “find” their CSA using an internet search or referrals from family and friends. What is striking about this move to internet communication is the power that individual farmers have to create their own website and craft their own story. It is this internet presence, according to Press and Arnould (2011) that propelled community supported agriculture farms into the mainstream marketplace.

The internet is continuing to transform how CSA farms communicate with shareholders. The introduction of Facebook and Twitter allows farmers the luxury, in some cases, of immediate and interactive communication. Shareholders choosing to take advantage of social media formats can be immediately apprised of everything happening on the farm. Press and Arnould published the results of their study of CSA websites in 2011, but the internet and social media environment is changing so quickly that already the all-important websites at the time of Press and Arnould’s study appear to be waning in importance and, in some cases, are being dropped completely in favor of a social media presence only.

At first dropping the website expense, both in terms of money and time, seems like a logical economic decision considering the availability of “free” interactive communication using Facebook and Twitter. For a social media user, the reduced importance of a CSA website is reinforced by the immediate feedback from interactive “likes” and comments from a Facebook presence. The Social Media session of the CSA Conference reinforced the idea that social media represents the most important part of a good CSA communication plan.

And yet, based on the results of my own non-digital survey, I question the reliability of this advice. When I specifically requested interviews with shareholders about their social media experience with their CSA, none of the volunteers who responded were even following their CSA on Facebook. Granted, the individuals willing to respond to a paper survey and email,

which is now also declining in importance, are the less likely social media users. But, the total reliance on social media at this time can mean that farms are operating in a social media echo chamber and thereby limiting their market to social media users only. There are still, in my survey results for example, a majority of shareholders who have not yet become social media adopters.

Using social media and constantly responding to other social media participants, it is easy to become convinced that everyone is an active user of social media resources. However, social media, at least at this point, does not appear to be the most important communication tool in the demographic of CSA shareholders. To drop or to fail to maintain the CSA website may impact the effectiveness of the sales and marketing efforts of small farms.

CSA websites are still important. Considering the older demographic of CSA shareholders and the tendency of some to consider community supported agriculture a countercultural phenomenon, the CSA website should still be considered an important communication tool. This is especially true in the springtime when potentially new shareholders are evaluating and considering their first CSA purchase.

The website can be used to communicate important ideas and details about the farm, the farmer, and the mission or goal of the farm. In addition, the website allows the farmer to provide important information regarding the different types of shares, ancillary products or offerings and opportunities that are part of a CSA membership. Although shareholders can be trained or instructed to utilize social media to find information about their CSA during the season, the website is an important static location to which the potential shareholder can reliably return for additional information. It is still too early for CSA farmers to discontinue their website presence.

None of the responses to the survey question “How did you select your CSA?” mentioned social media. Sixty-four respondents mentioned online searches and/or the farm website. Eighty-eight respondents talked about referrals from friends, meeting the farmer, or some other type of personal interaction. Many of the human interaction responses, however, also indicated that after hearing about the farm or receiving a referral to a farm, the shareholder did additional online research before making a decision. While a social media presence is important to a CSA farm, to entrust social media with the creation of a farm’s entire communication plan is not yet a good idea.

Summary of Conclusions. Following participant observations at three CSA farms, interviews with two farm managers, and 13 interviews with CSA shareholders, I described the findings of my research. In addition, I provided an analysis of my research using three theoretical frameworks. Based on my research and theoretical analysis I drew three conclusions: 1) Community in community supported agriculture is an individualistic experience. 2) There are potential personality similarities between CSA farmers and shareholders that could be capitalized upon to more accurately address needs and/or desires of shareholders and, potentially, build more reliable long-term community relationships. 3) Social media, although it has the potential to be an important tool for maintaining and communicating with shareholders or building community, should not be used exclusively yet.

Recommendations

To draw recommendations for action from my conclusions, I carefully looked at my conclusions from a small business, rather than theoretical, viewpoint. In this section I develop three recommendations for action from my conclusions. These recommendations are: 1) Knowing the experience of community is individualistic, farmers should keep the focus on the

“feel good” aspect of the shareholders’ CSA experience. 2) Farms should develop not only different marketing materials, but also different types of shares for promoting their farms to Type I (intrinsically-motivated) or Type X (extrinsically-motivated) individuals. 3) Keeping in mind that an internet presence is necessary, farms should not forego the internet website too soon.

Focus on What is Important to the Shareholders. All CSA farms sell fresh vegetables. So when a shareholder chooses one CSA over another CSA the reason will often be one of convenience (i.e. the location of the nearest drop site or the idea of on-farm pickup being available). In other cases the shareholder’s choice is simply how the shareholder feels about the farmer or the farm website. My survey results found that support for a local farmer was the most frequently mentioned reason for joining a CSA, not necessarily for choosing a particular CSA.

This finding about the importance of supporting a local business can be an important marketing tool for farmers, not necessarily to “sell” their CSA, but to reinforce the idea that what the shareholder is doing is a significant contribution to the support for their local community. This support is important for the community for both economic and food safety and availability reasons. By supporting a local farmer the infrastructure for local food and the possibility of locally-raised vegetables will continue to be available but this availability requires continuing support from shareholders.

While taking this tack (i.e. emphasizing the importance of the shareholder role in keeping local food available) in terms of marketing plays on the shareholders’ fears and concerns (Press & Arnould, 2011) about food safety, at the same time it reinforces the positive nature of the shareholder purchase. This positive reinforcement may, in the long run, make the shareholder more committed to continuing their CSA membership. Reminding shareholders throughout the

CSA season of how important their purchase is to the community and the farmer potentially increases the shareholder's individual "feel good" experience about their CSA membership.

Different Types of Shares. The farms in my study offered shares that were different primarily in size. All shareholders got the same vegetables, but in different amounts. However, recognizing that farmers and some shareholders exhibit similar personality traits with regard to how they approach the vegetables in the CSA box, it may be possible to present those same vegetables with a different emphasis for different types of shares.

The elements of craftsmanship and artistry on the part of the shareholders were apparent in many of the comments included with the returned surveys. By changing the focus of marketing efforts from vegetables to the less obvious ideals designed to appeal to intrinsically motivated individuals, farmers may find it easier to create long-term shareholder relationships. For extrinsically motivated individuals, a streamlined share that emphasizes convenience and familiar vegetables might be a more appealing option.

Perhaps two types of shares that differ in size, but also differ in how the farmer interacts or communicates with shareholders would provide a greater sense of satisfaction for the Type I (intrinsically-motivated) individual and the Type X (extrinsically-motivated) individual. Calling on Pink's (2009) descriptions and explanations of these two types of motivation, the farmer may be able to create a streamlined, less challenging type of share to appeal to the Type X personality and a more challenging and community-building type of share for the Type I personality. These offerings would require time to develop and implement, and, at first glance may seem laughable to the farmer in the midst of their summer flurry.

The Type I share could be focused more aggressively to attract shareholders interested in new vegetables, new recipes, and new options for sharing recipes, menus, or ideas. This may be

a perfect option for a virtual social media community of individuals sharing what they discover as they explore some of the new vegetables and recipes. This may also be a place during the winter months for the farmers to maintain a presence as they plan for the next growing season. This virtual community could be a place for shareholder input and requests for the next CSA season since being involved in the decision-making process enhances the feelings of community (Cobb, 1996).

The Type X share could be designed to attract the convenience-oriented individual with a less adventurous approach to vegetables. The Type X share would perhaps consist of the familiar vegetables in smaller quantities and, from a value-added perspective, cleaned and ready for cooking. This share could focus on fresh, fast, and informal. Thus giving the Type X individual the CSA experience without the extra work or the need to “think” or create.

By offering a different kind of share for the Type X shareholder, the farmer creates an easy introduction to the CSA for shareholders that would otherwise be discouraged from even trying the CSA model. This introductory share may expand the number of shareholders in general and, at the same time, become a recruiting tool for new intrinsically-motivated individuals to discover the offerings and possibilities included in the Type I community-based CSA share.

Explaining the different types of shares available would make the farm website a particularly important element of the farm’s marketing strategy. The website would provide the potential shareholder with the detailed information and explanations about the different types of shares. These shares could not be sold as intrinsically-motivated and extrinsically-motivated shares, but would need to be framed as, perhaps, convenience and/or craftsmanship models. This would need to be done in such a way as to pique the interest of these differently-motivated types

of individuals. And, for that subset of individuals making the move from the convenience model to the craftsmanship model, the website could provide an easy introduction and conversion to the virtual CSA community.

Do Not Discard the Website Yet. Some farms in my study have already discarded their CSA website, opting to use Facebook and Twitter almost exclusively to communicate with shareholders. When you are working with a defined audience, this choice may seem like a less expensive, easy-to-use method of communication. However, for purposes of recruiting new shareholders, this tack may not serve the farm as well.

Social media as a communication tool question was not overwhelmingly rated as an information source or communication tool with the farm in my survey. However, in the responses to my survey question about how shareholders found or chose their CSA, nearly half of the respondents had done a web search or visited the unofficial Land Stewardship Project CSA website listing. In a web search a Facebook listing will frequently appear at the top of the search results, but if the web search is not being done by someone familiar with or interested in Facebook, the Facebook format will not be a familiar or “welcoming” search option. Considering the older demographic of the “average” CSA member, maintaining a CSA website for information about the farm, instructions for placing an order, and photographs with a link to a Facebook page may be the most advantageous for the farm.

The social media session at the CSA conference called Facebook the only way to communicate with shareholders and the only way to “get your name out” on the web. Based on my survey results this conclusion about social media may be misplaced. As I said previously, if you have “trained” your existing CSA members to rely on Facebook, it is possible that a Facebook presence is all you need. However, for recruiting new shareholders or creating a

presence on the internet, a well-maintained and up-to-date web site should be part of a good CSA marketing and business plan. The web site will probably not remain a requirement for long, but at this point should be maintained at least for recruitment purposes.

Future Research

The purpose of this study was to look at how (or whether) the idea of community is developed in community supported agriculture. Although the research showed that, indeed, community is still an important part of the community supported agriculture milieu, community does take a different form than I at first envisioned. Naturally my study dealt with a very small sample of community supported agriculture farms. The idea of community may be expressed differently in less urban areas and/or in different areas of the country.

I identified two topics during my research that could potentially help identify additional resources and options to community supported agriculture farms for increasing or identifying new customers. I briefly touched on both topics in Chapters Four and Five, but additional exploration or research on these topics may provide helpful marketing and sales ideas for community supported agriculture farms. These ideas may be especially helpful to smaller, less commercial CSAs.

CSAs and a Mission. One issue that came up with some frequency was the idea of a farm with a “mission” which, in my study included church affiliation. Although I included the idea of “mission” in my discussion of community in Chapter Four, there is more to this idea than just the community aspect. The word “mission” was used most frequently by shareholders affiliated with a CSA that trained farmers to farm organically. Many of the shareholder comments in the returned surveys mentioned the “mission” of the farm. The idea of a mission, however, was not limited to the CSA with this training program. Shareholders from other farms

also talked about the idea of a mission. Frequently the mission idea was expressed in conjunction with ecological or environmental concepts.

The CSA with the farmer training program also had a drop site at one of the local churches. The church encouraged and promoted the CSA, not only because of the training program, but also because of the environmental health-related aspects of the CSA. Further research looking at the incorporation of the idea of a mission or CSA affiliation with a church or religious community might identify some additional building blocks for farmers to use in creating a dedicated CSA community.

CSAs and Social Media. Community is also built by the farms' internet presence. Although social media is not used by everyone with a CSA membership, the idea of social media as a communication tool is something that should be explored. Facebook and Twitter are easy and inexpensive communication tools for farms to use for communicating with existing shareholders in some, but not all, instances. Although these social media options are easy-to-use and shareholders have the ability to respond immediately to posts and inquiries from the farmer, it is easy to notice only the shareholders participating in the interactive social media performance, not realizing there may be other shareholders with whom one is not communicating.

My study indicates that social media should not be taken for granted as the only or most important mode of communication with shareholders. Additional research into shareholders' willingness or interest in social media as a communication tool should be done to help farmers determine how their time and online tools could be put to use most effectively. As time goes by communication done via social media venues will increase and gradually become a very natural

part of the communication plan. Currently, however, more research should be done into the accessibility and willingness of shareholders to rely completely on social media.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter Six I drew conclusions with regard to the research and analysis I did of the concept of community in community supported agriculture. I drew three conclusions: 1) Community in community supported agriculture is an individualistic experience. 2) There are potential personality similarities between CSA farmers and shareholders that could be capitalized upon to more accurately address needs and/or desires of shareholders and, potentially build more reliable long-term relationships. 3) Social media, although it has the potential to be an important tool for maintaining and communicating with shareholders or building community, should not be used exclusively yet.

In addition I provided three recommendations based upon my conclusions: 1) Knowing that the experience of community is individualistic, farmers should keep the focus on the “feel good” aspect of the shareholders’ CSA experience. 2) Farms should develop not only different marketing materials, but also different types of shares for promoting their farms for Type I (intrinsically-motivated) or Type X (extrinsically-motivated) individuals. 3) Keeping in mind that an internet presence is necessary, farms should not forego the internet website too soon.

These recommendations, while requiring some time and commitment in terms of how the farmers organize and implement their marketing strategies, may be helpful in the creation of a CSA with new and different approaches to shareholder communication depending on the type of shareholder rather than the type of share. By focusing on individuals, the CSA farmer may be more empowered to build community.

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Appendix A

IRB Consent Form – EDLD 905 – June 2011

CONSENT FORM**UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

The Future of Community Supported Agriculture: Will Success Build Community or Create a Commodity?

IRB Proposal # A11- 205-01

I am conducting a pilot study about the future of Community Supported Agriculture. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a CSA farmer supplying fresh vegetables to CSA members in the Twin Cities. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Connie Everson, a doctoral student at University of St. Thomas.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: Look at and analyze the future of “community” in the community-supported agriculture business model.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Participate in one or two 1-2 hour interviews during the growing season and another interview (possibly phone or one-on-one) during the winter. In addition, I would like to be allowed to spend a day or two on your farm observing your operation and/or participating in the work. Depending on your schedule, everything should be completed in less than a week except for the winter follow up interview.

If you are willing, I will also include a two-page customer survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in the CSA boxes for one week. You may see a copy of the survey before it is included in the boxes. The survey will be completely anonymous and you will receive an aggregated copy of the data after my dissertation is completed.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has some risks. First, it is possible that during my interviews and/or observations I may become aware of some trade secret or marketing ideas that, if disclosed to competitors, may reduce the effectiveness and/or usefulness of that idea. Second, I may discover some unflattering information about your farm that could potentially hurt the farm if disclosed. To minimize this risk, I will not discuss other farms participating in this study. All study participants will remain anonymous.

Confidentiality:

a. The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include written notes and (when possible) digital recordings of interviews with farmers. Interviews will be transcribed with all identifying characteristics removed. These notes, recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet at XXX Xxxxxxx Ave S. in Minneapolis, MN. An off-site digital backup will be stored at 212 Third Ave. N, Minneapolis, MN. These records will be accessible by me and a small group of students. All recordings will be destroyed after October 1, 2015.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until August 1, 2012. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you will be used is necessary to complete the study and no replacement study participant can be found. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Connie Everson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 612.xxxxxx. You may contact my instructor, Dr. Michael Porter at 651-xxx-xxxx. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-xxx-xxxx with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date



Signature of Instructor

_____ 6.3.11 _____

Date

Appendix B

E-mail Requesting Farmer Participation

Hi,

I spoke with you briefly at the CSA Fair at _____. I am writing a dissertation on community-supported agriculture and I was looking for CSA's that might be willing to participate in this study. At that point you said that you would be willing to be interviewed.

Are you still willing to be a part of this study?

Being part of the study would include an interview. In addition, I would like to spend some time "observing" and, some time actually helping out with the work. (I grew up on a farm, so I have a fair idea of what "work" means.)

If you have some time later this week, I would LOVE to sit down and talk with you for a little while.

I will try calling you sometime on _____ to follow up.

Thanks,

Appendix C

Farmer Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Informed Consent			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simply giving a consent form to a subject does <u>not</u> constitute informed consent. Consent itself is a process of communication. ▪ Be sure all required consent forms are attached to your project. ▪ In addition to consent forms, assent forms are required if your subjects are children ages 10 and older. ▪ All forms are located in the document library. 			
Describe Study			
In a script, state what you will say to the prospective participant describing your study.			
<p>FARMER: I am doing a research project looking at the concept of community in community supported agriculture and how (or if) it has changed. I am looking for CSA farmers who are willing to allow me to work with them and their shareholders and try to understand how or if the idea of community is still an important part of the CSA relationship. Study participation would include an on-farm interview talking about your concept of community, CSA's and your ideas about the future of community supported agriculture .</p> <p>If you choose to participate, in order to get the shareholder perspective, I would also request that you send an email to your shareholders letting them know that you are participating in this study and allow me to include a written survey (which you will see/approve ahead of time) in their weekly CSA box.</p> <p>I want to respect your work schedule and I want to make sure you know this is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate.</p> <p>Depending on your schedule (and mine), ideally everything should be completed in 1-2 days. Would you be interested in participating in this study?</p> <p>SHAREHOLDER: I would not be talking to the shareholders UNLESS the shareholder had returned a written survey and volunteered for the one-on-one interview.</p> <p>Thank you for returning your survey and vounteering to participate in my study. I am doing a research project looking at the concept of community in community supported agriculture and how it has changed. I am particularly interested in your views/ideas about community and how your ideas about community impact your CSA membership and participation. The interview would be a telephone interview and could take anywhere from 10-15 minutes. Of course, this is all on a strictly voluntary basis and you are free to discontinue your participation or our interview at any time. Would you still be</p>			

interested in participating in this study?

Participant Questions

What questions will be asked to assess the participant's understanding of his/her participation in your research? Identify 3-5 open-ended questions (not "yes/no" questions) that address procedures, risks (if any), confidentiality and voluntariness.

SHAREHOLDER: Thank you for returning your survey and volunteering to participate in the interview portion of my study. This is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation. The interview will probably take 10-15 minutes. I will be emailing you to arrange a time for a telephone conversation about your CSA experience. This telephone conversation will be recorded. How does that sound to you?

SHAREHOLDER: During our interview I will be asking about your CSA experience and asking for more details about some of your responses on your survey. What are the topics, if any, that you would consider most important for me to cover during our interview?

FARMER: If you choose to participate in this study, I will be emailing you to arrange a time for an interview on your farm. That interview could be a sit-down interview or an "in the field" interview. Which type of interview would you prefer?

FARMER: I am studying the concept of "community" as part of community supported agriculture. What are the topics that you would consider most important for us to talk about during our interview?

FARMER: I know that farming is a 12-month job, but the summer and fall are especially busy. How much time do you think you would have available to talk with me about your farm and what you do?

Obtaining Consent

At what point in the research process will consent be obtained? Be specific.

FARMERS: Consent forms will be emailed to the farmer before going to the farm for the participant observations and I will request that the form be completed before the start of the participant observations.

SHAREHOLDERS: I have included a one-page consent form with the anonymous survey and IF a shareholder volunteers for a more in-depth interview, consent forms will be emailed to the shareholders and I will ask that the consent forms be emailed back to me prior to the scheduled interview.

Will the investigator(s) personally secure informed consent for all subjects?

Yes



No



If **NO**, identify below the individuals who will obtain consent (include job title/credentials):

--

Appendix D

Farmer Interview Questions

- How do you (the farmer) view the idea of community in the context of your farm?
- What (if anything) do you do to create/build community?
- Why/How did you become a CSA farmer?
- If you use social media to communicate with your CSA members, how would you rate the effectiveness of these tools in communicating with your customers?
- How do you approach the idea of marketing your CSA?
- Does the idea of community play any of your marketing ideas?
- What do you perceive as the most important aspect of CSA membership to your customers?
- Have the customers' expectations changed in the past couple of years?
- What changes (if any) have you made to accommodate changes in customer expectations?
- If you have other revenue streams (e.g. farmers market, local restaurants, etc.), how do you evaluate the importance of customer relationships in these other income streams?
- If your farm organizes social activities for your CSA members, how important are these activities in helping you manage customer relationships?

Appendix E

Suggested Email – Farmer to CSA Members

Farmers were asked to let shareholder know that they would be receiving my survey in their next CSA delivery/pickup.

Dear Shareholder,

Our farm is participating in a study about community supported agriculture. The researcher, Connie Everson, has been working with us here on the farm and she is learning about what goes into raising the vegetables and produce you receive every week.

Now Connie is interested in your CSA experience. In your CSA box this coming week there will be a short survey about your experience.

We would encourage you to complete the survey and return it to Connie as quickly as possible. The survey will be anonymous. However, Connie has promised to provide me with a comprehensive summary of the responses after the study has been completed.

We will use the information from this study to provide you, the shareholders, with the best experience/service we can.

Connie is also looking for volunteers she can interview about their CSA experience. If you would be willing to be interviewed, please make sure to include your name and contact information when you return your survey to Connie.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Connie at xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu.

Sincerely,

FARMER

Appendix F

Open Letter to Shareholders Accompanying Survey

Dear CSA Member:

I am doing a research project about community supported agriculture (CSA) memberships at the University of St. Thomas. Your CSA farmer has agreed to participate in this study and is allowing me to survey his/her CSA members as part of my research. *You should have received an email from your farmer during the past week about this study.*

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous.

I have enclosed a three-page series of questions about your CSA experience. It will take 10-15 minutes for you to complete the survey. Once completed, please put your completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

All responses are anonymous. However, the results of all returned surveys will be combined and given to your farmer.

I am also looking for volunteers who would be willing to be interviewed about their CSA experience. This interview (which you may choose to handle via phone or in person) will take 30-60 minutes. If you would be willing to talk about your CSA experience, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed below.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 612.xxx.xxxx or xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu.

Thank you for your participation,

Connie Everson
xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu
612.xxx.xxxx

Appendix G

Shareholder – Confidentiality Agreement Accompanying Survey

All information is ANONYMOUS and CONFIDENTIAL.

When the first Community Supported Agriculture farms began in 1986 the concept of “community” was the central idea behind the formation of these farms. Since 1986 the CSA model has changed in many ways including changes in the market place, changes in consumer ideas about organic/locally-grown food, and the introduction of internet communications for CSA’s. The focus of my study is the concept of "community" in this new Community Supported Agriculture environment.

The purpose of my study is to look at the role and/or significance of "community" in today's CSA environment. Although I have found many articles and dissertations about CSA farms, none of the studies have looked at the concept of community and how it has changed. I want to look at the concept of community from the farmers' and the shareholders' perspective.

You are a shareholder for a community supported agriculture farm participating in this study. I am interested in your ideas and perceptions about community. This survey asks questions about your CSA experience and your participation in CSA activities. You will be completely anonymous if you return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. However, I am also looking for volunteers willing to talk about their CSA experience with me. If you are willing to be interviewed as part of this study, please include your name and email address on the last page of this questionnaire.

If you choose to include your name and address at the end of this survey, you may be contacted to participate in a one-on-one telephone interview about your CSA experience. This conversation will be recorded and will take 10-15 minutes depending on what you have to say about your experience.

There are no risks, benefits or compensation for completing this survey or volunteering for a telephone interview.

All notes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet at 999 X Ave S. in Minneapolis. All transcripts and notes will use pseudonyms for the farms and the interviewees. In the case that the notes are lost, the notes will be almost entirely in shorthand and not readable by anyone else. All transcripts stored on my computer will be secured with facial recognition security. The only other individual with access to any identifiable information in addition to me as principal investigator will be my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. John Holst.

Data will be retained until August 31, 2015. At that point all transcripts with any identifying information will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will not effect your current or future relations with any participating agencies or institutions or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw at any time up to and including August 31, 2013 using the contact information on the final page of this questionnaire. You are also free to skip any questions that may be asked.

Appendix H

Shareholder – Survey

Survey for Dissertation Research Project

All information is ANONYMOUS and CONFIDENTIAL.

NOTE: *I am also looking for volunteers to talk about their CSA experience.* If you are willing to participate further in this research project, please include your name and email address and/or phone number at the end of this survey.

Please return survey in attached envelope before MM/DD/YYYY

SECTION 1: CSA Shareholder Information

- 1) **Gender of the person completing survey:** FEMALE MALE
- 2) **Age of the person completing survey:** 18 or younger 19-39 40-59 60 or older
- 3) **Children under the age of 18 in your home?** YES NO
- 4) **Race of the person completing survey** (check all that apply): African American Asian
 American Indian Asian White Other
- 5) **Education level of person completing survey:** High School/GED Some College
 Associate/Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree
- 6) **Household Income Category:** < \$29,999 \$30,000-\$69,999 \$70,000-\$99,999
 \$100,000-\$149,999 \$150,000-199,999 >200,000
- 7) **How many years has your household been a member of this CSA?**
 First Year Second Year Third Year Fourth Year Five Years or More
- 8) **Have you ever been a member of a different CSA?** YES NO
- 9) **Are you responsible for most of the food purchases in your home?** YES NO
- 10) **Do you do vegetable gardening at home, in addition to your CSA share?** YES NO

SECTION 2: About My CSA Share and Farmer

Where do you pick up your share? On the Farm Prearranged Drop Site Delivered/My Home is a Drop Site

How many times have you met your CSA farmer? 0 1 2 3 4 or more

How many times have you visited your CSA farm? 0 1 2 3 4 or more

Please place an "X" under the number that most closely matches your view of the statement.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Agree Agree Somewhat No Opinion Disagree Somewhat Strongly Disagree

Being acquainted with my CSA farmer is important to me (us)

We make preparing/eating CSA produce a family activity

My (our) CSA experience has changed the way I (we) eat

I (we) get more food than I (we) can eat in my CSA share

We (I) talk about the farm/farmer throughout the CSA season

I (we) follow my CSA farm on Twitter and/or Facebook

I (we) visit the CSA farm's website once a week or more

I plan to purchase a share from this CSA next year

SECTION 3: Farm Social Events

1) If your farmer/farm sponsors volunteer work days on the farm, how many times have you participated?

 Never 1 2 3 4 or more No work days offered

2) IF your farm does sponsor social events (such as potluck, barn dance, pea harvest, potato planting, etc.) how many times have you participated?

 Never 1 2 3 4 or more No social events offered

3) If you have attended farm-sponsored events (volunteer work days, potlucks, barn dance, pea harvest, etc.), have you made any new acquaintances at these activities?

 YES NO No events offered (skip questions 4 &5)

4) If you have NOT attended farm functions, what is the biggest impediment to participating (e.g. distance to the farm, other time commitments, farm does not sponsor social events)?

5) If you have attended farm-sponsored events, how did the experience change your ideas/thoughts about your CSA participation (e.g. your CSA share became more interesting, you felt more "attached" to your CSA farm, you met interesting people, etc.)?

SECTION 4: CSA Experience

How did you select your CSA (e.g. website, referral from friend, CSA fair, acquaintance w/ farmer, etc.)?

What kinds of things are important to you in selecting your CSA (e.g. organic produce, supporting a local farmer, an alternative to purchasing produce, etc.)?

Please place an “X” beside all statements that apply to your CSA experience.

- I am making my community a better place because of my CSA membership.
- I am doing something special for the environment with my CSA membership.
- Other CSA members share many of my values about food.
- Other CSA members share many of my values about the environment.
- I feel like part of a community when I participate in CSA sponsored social events.
- I feel like part of a community when I pick up my CSA share.
- I have made new friends because of my CSA experience.
- I am making a political statement with my CSA membership.
- I am proud of my CSA membership.
- I eat differently after being a member of a CSA.
- My CSA membership has changed the way I shop for groceries.
- I encourage my friends to become CSA members.

Additional comments about your CSA experience: _____

THANK YOU for your assistance in this research project. Please make sure you have completed all three pages and then place the completed forms in the self-addressed, stamped envelope and drop it in the mail before MM.DD.YYYY.

P.S. If you are willing to participate further, please include your name and email address or phone number below. I will contact you within the next 3-4 weeks to arrange an interview about your CSA experience. IF you want to make sure your responses to the questions above remain anonymous, you can contact me separately via email at xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu or via phone at 612.xxx.xxxx.

NAME _____ **EMAIL** _____

PHONE _____

Appendix I

E-mail Requesting Shareholder Interview – First Round

I'm Connie Everson and I'm a graduate student at the University of St. Thomas. Last summer I interviewed your CSA farmer and you returned a survey for a study that I am working on about community supported agriculture.

With that survey I asked for volunteers to tell me about more about your CSA experience. *(My plans were to contact volunteers as soon as possible after the surveys were distributed. But, alas, I am running behind with that good intention.)*

I am now following up with people (like yourself) who included their contact information in the returned survey. If you are still willing to complete a 10-15 minute telephone interview about your CSA experience, I would love to talk to you. Your responses would be a very useful addition to the work/research I am doing about community supported agriculture.

I would like to schedule interviews during the week of December 10 or December 17. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. (If I need to set my alarm and get up in the middle of the night, I will do so!)

If you would be willing to participate further, please let me know and I will send you the additional information.

Thanks so much,

Appendix J

Email to Volunteers Prior to Interview – First Round

Thanks so much for responding to my email so quickly! I am excited to hear what you have to say...

There are a few housekeeping items that I need to check with you about....

- 1) **The University requires that I have a completed Consent Form from everyone that I interview.** I have attached a copy of this Form. IF you are willing to participate, please “click” the check box at the bottom of this form and return it to me via email anytime before our interview.
- 2) Just to give you a “heads up” about some of the topics that I hope to cover, I have included some of the potential questions below. Sometimes, conversations go in different directions so I may or may not actually get to all of these questions.
 - What was your biggest surprise when you first joined your CSA?
 - If you could change one thing about your CSA what would that be?
 - What was your biggest disappointment?
 - If your farmer sold his farm to a big corporation from California and moved to Tahiti, would you continue with the same CSA?
 - If your farmer told you he was going to sell his vegetables to a distributor who would provide your CSA box, so not all your vegetables would be coming from his/her farm but you would have a wider variety of vegetables in your box would that be acceptable to you?
 - If you were looking for a new CSA, what is the first thing you would look for?
 - Have you ever written an email to your farmer?

Does anytime on _____ work for you? If so, please pick a time and I will put you on my calendar. If you are willing to participate, please return the attached Shareholder Consent Form and I will follow up with you on the date you select.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Appendix K

Shareholder Consent Form – First Round

CONSENT FORM

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
General Information Statement about the study:			
When the first Community Supported Agriculture farms began in 1986 the concept of “community” was the central idea behind the formation of these farms. Since 1986 the CSA model has changed in many ways including changes in the market place, changes in consumer ideas about organic/locally-grown food, and the introduction of internet communications for CSA’s. The focus of my study is the concept of "community" in this new Community Supported Agriculture environment.			
You are invited to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant for this study because:			
You are a shareholder for a community supported agriculture farm serving the Twin Cities area and you have returned a survey that was part of this study. When you returned your survey you included your contact information and volunteered for a one-on-one interview about your CSA experience.			
Study is being conducted by:		Connie Everson	
Research Advisor (if applicable):		Dr. John Holst	
Department Affiliation:		LPA	
Background Information			
The purpose of the study is:			
The purpose of my study is to look at the role and/or significance of "community" in today's CSA environment. Although I have found many articles and dissertations about CSA farms, none of the studies have looked at the concept of community and how it has changed. I want to look at the concept of community from the farmers' and the shareholders' perspective.			
Procedures			
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following: <i>State specifically what the subjects will be doing, including if they will be performing any tasks. Include any information about assignment to study groups, length of time for participation, frequency of procedures, audio taping, etc.</i>			

<p>You have completed the paper survey included in your CSA delivery the week of MM/DD/YY. When you returned the survey to me you included your name and contact information thereby volunteering to participate in a one-on-one interview. Interview volunteers will be interviewed via the telephone. This conversation will be recorded and will take 10-15 minutes depending on what you have to say about your experience.</p>
<p>Risks and Benefits of being in the study</p>
<p>The risks involved for participating in the study are:</p>
<p>There are no risks for CSA shareholders.</p>
<p>The direct benefits you will receive from participating in the study are:</p>
<p>There are no direct benefits for shareholders for participating in this study.</p>
<p>Compensation</p>
<p>Details of compensation (if and when disbursement will occur and conditions of compensation) include: <i>Note:</i> In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment and follow-up care as needed. Payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer if any (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).</p>
<p>NA</p>
<p>Confidentiality</p>
<p>The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report published, information will not be provided that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records, who will have access to records and when they will be destroyed as a result of this study include:</p>
<p>All notes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet at XXX Xxxxxxx Ave S. in Minneapolis. All transcripts and notes will use pseudonyms for the farms and the interviewees. In the case that the notes are lost, the notes will be almost entirely in shorthand and not readable by anyone else. All transcripts stored on my computer will be secured with facial recognition security.</p> <p>The only other individual with access to any identifiable information in addition to myself as principal investigator will be my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. John Holst.</p> <p>Data will be retained until August 31, 2015. At that point all transcripts with any identifying information will be destroyed.</p>
<p>Voluntary Nature of the Study</p>
<p>Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any cooperating agencies or institutions or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the date\time specified in the study.</p> <p>You are also free to skip any questions that may be asked unless there is an exception(s) to this rule listed below with its rationale for the exception(s).</p>
<p>You will be allowed to withdraw from the study up to and including August 31, 2013 by contacting the researcher via email (xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu) or phone (612.xxx.xxxx).</p>

Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you	will be used in the study		
Contacts and Questions			
You may contact any of the resources listed below with questions or concerns about the study.			
Researcher name	Connie Everson		
Researcher email	xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu		
Researcher phone	612.xxx.xxxx		
Research Advisor name	Dr. John Holst		
Research Advisor email	jdholst@stthomas.edu		
Research Advisor phone	651.xxx.xxxx		
UST IRB Office	651.xxx.xxxx		
Statement of Consent			
I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I am at least 18 years old. I consent to participate in the study. By checking the electronic signature box, I am stating that I understand what is being asked of me and I give my full consent to participate in the study.			
Signature of Study Participant <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic signature</i>		Date	
Print Name of Study Participant			
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable)			
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic Signature</i>		Date	
Print Name of Parent or Guardian (if applicable)			
Signature of Researcher			
Signature of Researcher <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic signature*</i>		Date	
Print Name of Researcher	Connie Everson		

*Electronic signatures certify that::

The signatory agrees that he or she is aware of the polities on research involving participants of the University of St. Thomas and will safeguard the rights, dignity and privacy of all participants.

- The information provided in this form is true and accurate.
- The principal investigator will seek and obtain prior approval from the UST IRB office for any substantive modification in the proposal, including but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators/agencies as well as changes in procedures.
- Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the UST IRB office and to the subjects.

The research will not be initiated and subjects cannot be recruited until final approval is granted.

Appendix L

IRB Amendment for CSA Conferences and Second Round of Shareholder Interviews

APPLICATION TO AMEND PREVIOUSLY APPROVED RESEARCH

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Request for Change			
Please explain in one or two brief paragraphs the change(s) you wish to make to your research protocol and your reason(s) for making the change(s):			
<p>CHANGE 1) I wish to expand my research options to include three public conferences for community supported agriculture farmers and organic growers. These conferences are widely attended by community supported agriculture farmers and include workshops on building community and sustaining shareholder relationships. These conferences give me an opportunity to sit with farmers and listen to the topics of interest for farmers trying to sustain their community and customer base. I do not plan on interviewing any farmers at these conferences. I do plan, however, to attend the workshop sessions for participant observation.</p> <p>CHANGE 2) As a result of survey responses and follow up interviews with CSA shareholder volunteers I have identified a topic about which additional information is important to my study. I want to go back to my volunteer list and follow up with the volunteers with whom I have not yet spoken about how/if social media has played a role in building community and relationships between the shareholder and the farm/farmer. I would be contacting these volunteers outside of my previously stated timeframe.</p>			
Please list the section(s) of your protocol that will be affected by the change(s):			
Lay Summary - Research Methods and Questions and Expectations or Participants (see highlights) Shareholder Consent Form			
Please list the section(s) of your consent form that will be affected by the change(s):			
The section describing why the participant was selected will be modified to explain that I am following up outside the initial timeframe when the survey was distributed.			
Please list any other supporting documents (e.g. flyers, recruitment letters, letters of cooperation from organizations) that will be revised, and describe the revision(s) to these documents in one or two			

sentences each:			
REVISED: Shareholder Questions - Based on previous interviews and survey responses I am looking for additional information about how/if social media has played a role in farmer/shareholder communications.			
Please list any new supporting documents that will be required:			
NEW: Follow Up Email to Shareholder Volunteer - This email will explain how I obtained their contact information and why I am following up outside the original timeframe as documented in the survey.			
Please attach each of the following:			
1	Updated versions of any sections of your protocol affected by the revision, with the changes highlighted or in a different font color.		
2	Your revised consent form, if applicable, with the changes highlighted or in a different font color.		
3	Any revised supporting documents, if applicable, with the changes highlighted or in a different font color.		
4	Any new supporting documents, if applicable .		
Signature of Researcher		Date 2-12-13	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to sign electronically*			
Print Name of Researcher			
Connie Everson			

*Electronic signatures certify that::

- The signatory agrees that he or she is aware of the polities on research involving participants of the University of St. Thomas and will safeguard the rights, dignity and privacy of all participants.
- The information provided in this form is true and accurate.
- The principal investigator will seek and obtain prior approval from the UST IRB office for any substantive modification in the proposal, including but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators/agencies as well as changes in procedures.
- Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the UST IRB office and to the subjects.
- The research will not be initiated and subjects cannot be recruited until final approval is granted.

Appendix M

IRB Amended Lay Summary for Second Round of Shareholder Interviews and CSA Conferences

LAY SUMMARY - AMENDED

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Lay Summary			
Please complete each section in clear, easy-to-read language that can be understood by a person unfamiliar with your research and your field. Written correctly, sections of this summary can be used in your consent form.			
Background			
Provide <u>ONE</u> paragraph to explain the importance of the research and how it fits with previous research in the field.			
I intend to study the concept of community in Community Supported Agriculture. When the first Community Supported Agriculture farms began in 1986 the concept of “community” was the central idea. Since 1986 the CSA model and marketplace has changed in many ways including changes in the market place, changes in consumer ideas about organic/locally-grown food, and the introduction of internet communications for CSA’s. The role and/or significance of community in this new environment has not been studied. Although I found many articles and dissertations about CSA farms, none of the studies have looked at the concept of community and how it has changed.			
Research Methods and Questions			
Specify the overall research question(s), hypothesis, methods you will use to address the research question(s). Be sure to attach copies of ALL materials to be used in the study to your project (such as surveys, interview questions, dependent measures, and so forth).			
I will be looking at both farmers’ and shareholders’ visions and ideas about “community” as part of the relationship in which they participate. FARMERS: I plan to use a day or two of participant observations on the farms. I will arrange a time to talk to the farmer before to work day begins or after the work day ends (see attached list of interview questions). In addition, I will request that the farmer allow me to include a quantitative survey in the weekly CSA distribution. SHAREHOLDERS: I will use a quantitative shareholder survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This survey will be included in the weekly CSA distribution to all shareholders of participating farms. The survey will also include a request for one-on-one interviews with CSA shareholders. All interviews will be done with shareholders who volunteer as part of returning the anonymous survey (see attached survey and recruitment letter).			

CSA/ORGANIC GROWER Conferences: I will attend several public events sponsored by and/or catering to CSA farmers. No farmer interviews are planned. I intend to attend the conference workshops and seminars for participant observation and research purposes.

Expectations of Participants

State precisely what you will have participants do.

Identify the location of data collection and the expected time commitment of participants.

Farmers - All research will be done on the farms during participant observations. Farmer interviews will be "sit-down" interviews, conducted before the work day begins or after the work day ends. The day will be recorded and transcribed.

I will be asking farmers to send an email to their shareholders (see attached letter) introducing my study and letting shareholders know that the farm is participating in my study. I will also ask the farmer to allow me to include a quantitative survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in their CSA distribution boxes for one week.

Shareholders - I plan to include a paper survey with a self-addressed/stamped envelope in shareholder boxes. The paper survey will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. With the paper survey, I will also include a request for volunteers to participate in an in-depth interview about the CSA experience. Phone interviews will be conducted with interview volunteers. These interviews will take 10-15 minutes depending on the voluability of the participant. The confidentiality agreement will be emailed to the participant PRIOR TO the phone interview.

If no contact information is returned with the survey by the shareholder, the returned survey will be anonymous.

MODIFICATION: I will be following up with volunteers not contacted previously to discuss the use of social media as part of the CSA experience. These interviews will again be telephone interviews about volunteers' CSA experience.

Analysis of Existing Data

If you are analyzing existing data, records or specimens, explain the source and type, as well as your means of access to them.

NA

Appendix N

E-mail Requesting Shareholder Interview – Second Round

Dear CSA Shareholder,

Last summer you were a shareholder with _____ Farm and your farmer participated in a study I was conducting about the idea of community in community supported agriculture. As part of that study you completed a three-page survey/questionnaire about your CSA experience. When you returned that survey to me you included your contact information.

Due to the large number of volunteers I was not able to connect with everyone within my prescribed timeframe.

After reviewing the survey results and some of the responses that I received from the volunteers I interviewed, I have expanded my research topic to include some additional questions about farm/shareholder communication and social media.

I am looking for volunteers to participate in a brief telephone interview to discuss your CSA experience and how you communicated with your farm/farmer.

This is completely voluntary. I am hoping to scheduled interviews for the week of _____ and _____. If you would have a few minutes, I would love to talk to you.

If you have any questions or would be willing to be interviewed about your CSA experience, please contact me via return email or via phone at 612.xxx.xxxx.

Connie Everson
Student
St. Thomas University
612.xxx.xxxx

Appendix O

Follow Up Email to Volunteers – Second Round

Thanks so much for responding to my email so quickly! I would LOVE to talk to you about your CSA experience.

There are a few housekeeping items that I need to check with you about....

- 1) The University requires that I have a completed Consent Form from everyone that I interview. I have attached a copy of this Form. IF you are willing to participate, please “click” the check box at the bottom of this form and return it to me via email anytime before our interview.
- 2) Just to give you a “heads up” about some of the topics that I hope to cover, I have included some of the potential questions below. Sometimes, conversations go in different directions so I may or may not actually get to all of these questions.

When you first became a CSA member, how did you choose your CSA farmer?

Did you use the internet to find your farmer?

How often, if at all, do you visit your farmer’s website?

Are you on Facebook?

Is your farmer on Facebook?

(If yes to both questions) Have you liked your farmer on Facebook?

Do you use Twitter?

Does your farmer use Twitter?

(If yes to both questions) Do you follow your farmer on Twitter?

What is your farmer’s most memorable Facebook or Twitter posting?

What is your preferred method of communication with your farmer?

I am just beginning to schedule interviews now. If none of the times below work for you, please let me know. I have PLENTY of other times available.

Monday, _____ - Morning and Evening

Tuesday, _____ - Morning, Afternoon, Evening

Wednesday, _____ - Morning and Evening

Thanks so much!!!

Appendix P

Shareholder Consent Form – Second Round

CONSENT FORM

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
General Information Statement about the study:			
<p>When the first Community Supported Agriculture farms began in 1986 the concept of “community” was the central idea behind the formation of these farms. Since 1986 the CSA model has changed in many ways including changes in the market place, changes in consumer ideas about organic/locally-grown food, and the introduction of internet communications for CSA’s. The focus of my study is the concept of "community" in this new Community Supported Agriculture environment.</p>			
<p>You are invited to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant for this study because:</p>			
<p>Last summer you were a shareholder for a community supported agriculture farm serving the Twin Cities area and last fall you returned a survey that was part of this study. When you returned your survey you included your contact information and volunteered for a one-on-one interview about your CSA experience. I have already completed many of the interviews, but some new questions have been raised as part of these interviews. I am now doing some follow up interviews with some of the remaining volunteers about these new topics.</p>			
Study is being conducted by:		Connie Everson	
Research Advisor (if applicable):		Dr. John Holst	
Department Affiliation:		LPA	
Background Information			
<p>The purpose of the study is:</p>			
<p>The purpose of my study is to look at the role and/or significance of "community" in today's CSA environment. Although I have found many articles and dissertations about CSA farms, none of the studies have looked at the concept of community and how it has changed. I want to look at the concept of community from the farmers' and the shareholders' perspective.</p>			
Procedures			
<p>If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following: <i>State specifically what the subjects will be doing, including if they will be performing any tasks. Include</i></p>			

<i>any information about assignment to study groups, length of time for participation, frequency of procedures, audio taping, etc.</i>
You have completed the paper survey included in your CSA delivery the week of MM/DD/YY. When you returned the survey to me you included your name and contact information thereby volunteering to participate in a one-on-one interview. Interview volunteers will be interviewed via the telephone. This conversation will be recorded and will take 10-15 minutes depending on what you have to say about your experience.
Risks and Benefits of being in the study
The risks involved for participating in the study are:
There are no risks for CSA shareholders.
The direct benefits you will receive from participating in the study are:
There are no direct benefits for shareholders for participating in this study.
Compensation
Details of compensation (if and when disbursement will occur and conditions of compensation) include: <i>Note:</i> In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment and follow-up care as needed. Payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer if any (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).
NA
Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report published, information will not be provided that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records, who will have access to records and when they will be destroyed as a result of this study include:
All notes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet at XXX Xxxxxxx Ave S. in Minneapolis. All transcripts and notes will use pseudonyms for the farms and the interviewees. In the case that the notes are lost, the notes will be almost entirely in shorthand and not readable by anyone else. All transcripts stored on my computer will be secured with facial recognition security. The only other individual with access to any identifiable information in addition to myself as principal investigator will be my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. John Holst. Data will be retained until August 31, 2015. At that point all transcripts with any identifying information will be destroyed.
Voluntary Nature of the Study
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any cooperating agencies or institutions or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the date\time specified in the study. You are also free to skip any questions that may be asked unless there is an exception(s) to this rule listed below with its rationale for the exception(s).
You will be allowed to withdraw from the study up to and including August 31, 2013 by contacting the

researcher via email (xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu) or phone (612.xxx.xxxx).			
Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you		will be used in the study	
Contacts and Questions			
You may contact any of the resources listed below with questions or concerns about the study.			
Researcher name	Connie Everson		
Researcher email	xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu		
Researcher phone	612.xxx.xxxx		
Research Advisor name	Dr. John Holst		
Research Advisor email	jdholst@stthomas.edu		
Research Advisor phone	651.xxx.xxxx		
UST IRB Office	651.xxx.xxxx		
Statement of Consent			
I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I am at least 18 years old. I consent to participate in the study. By checking the electronic signature box, I am stating that I understand what is being asked of me and I give my full consent to participate in the study.			
Signature of Study Participant <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic signature</i>		Date	
Print Name of Study Participant			
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable)			
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic Signature</i>		Date	
Print Name of Parent or Guardian (if applicable)			
Signature of Researcher			
Signature of Researcher <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Electronic signature*</i>		Date	
Print Name of Researcher	Connie J. Everson		

*Electronic signatures certify that::

The signatory agrees that he or she is aware of the polities on research involving participants of the University of St. Thomas and will safeguard the rights, dignity and privacy of all participants.

- The information provided in this form is true and accurate.
- The principal investigator will seek and obtain prior approval from the UST IRB office for any substantive modification in the proposal, including but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators/agencies as well as changes in procedures.
- Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the UST IRB office and to the subjects.
- The research will not be initiated and subjects cannot be recruited until final approval is granted.

Appendix Q

Original 2012 IRB Participant Information

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Participant Information			
Please completely answer each question in clear, easy to read language. Reminder, it is extremely important that all information obtained from your participants be kept as confidential as possible.			
Target Population			
You described and selected your target population in your application. Provide your rationale for purposefully selecting your target population(s).			
As part of studying the concept of "community" in the community supported agriculture "world" my target population will be community supported farmers and shareholders			
If you are purposefully excluding women or minorities in your study, explain why.			
NA			
If you are conducting research on school children during class time, please answer the following two questions:			
Describe in detail the activity planned for children not participating in your research.			
NA			
Who will supervise non-participants? Include this information in the consent form.			
NA			
Anticipated Participants			
Explain if you anticipate in your study a sample of gender, race or ethnicity that is not proportionate to the general population.			
Based on current literature the population (both farmers and shareholders) participating in community supported agriculture activities is primarily white and college educated. As a consequence of the community supported agriculture population, it is highly likely that my sample will not be proportionate to the general population.			
Recruitment of Participants			
If subjects are recruited or research is conducted through an agency or institution other than UST, submit written documentation of approval and/or cooperation. This document should use the agency or institution's letterhead and contain enough information to demonstrate the agency or institution understands of their role in your research.			
Please be advised that you will need a letter of permission from any organization (printed on letterhead) where you will be recruiting.			
Please answer the following:			
Identify the locations where participants will be recruited (name, city and state).			

I will be recruiting community supported agriculture farmers serving the Twin Cities Area.
Who will make the initial recruitment contact (full name)?
As the primary researcher, I will be making all recruitment contact.
If the principle investigator is not the recruiter, describe how contact will be made with those who will be doing the recruitment. Describe what will be said to potential recruiters.
NA
Describe how participants will be recruited. Include a script or other recruitment materials.
<p>I have visited with farmers and picked up advertising materials from a variety of farms at spring CSA Fairs in the Twin Cities. I plan on sending two emails and a hard copy letter to each of the farmers asking for participants.</p> <p>Initial Farmer EMAIL/Hard Copy Letter:</p> <p>Earlier this spring you were an exhibitor at a CSA Fair at the _____ Coop in Minneapolis. I spoke you briefly about my dissertation project studying the concept of community in community supported agriculture and how it has changed. I am currently looking for farms to participate in my study.</p> <p>Study participation will include a day or two of participant observation during which I come to your farm to work with you and/or your employees. Hopefully during that working time I will have an opportunity to talk with you and/or your employees about what you do and your experience with the concept of community in your CSA.</p> <p>If you choose to participate, I will be contacting you to schedule an interview/ work day. I grew up on a farm and I know that during the summer and fall it is tough to set aside time for an interview so I want to simply talk with you while we are working. Please know that this is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate.</p> <p>If you choose to participate, you can determine your own level of participation. The first level would be the participant observation described above. The second level of participation is the inclusion of a hard copy survey (see attached copy) in one of your weekly distribution boxes. I would be using this survey to recruit volunteer shareholders for one-on-one interviews about their experience and insights concerning the concept of community in community supported agriculture. The shareholder survey is not a required part of your participation.</p> <p>Depending on your schedule (and mine), ideally everything should be completed in less than a week. Would you be interested in participating in this study?</p> <p>Initial Shareholder Hard Copy Letter</p> <p>I am doing a research project about community supported agriculture (CSA) memberships at the University of St. Thomas. Your CSA farmer has agreed to participate in this study and is allowing me to survey his/her CSA members as part of my research. You should have received an email from your farmer during the past week about this study.</p> <p>Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous.</p> <p>I have enclosed a three-page series of questions about your CSA experience. It will take 10-15 minutes for you to complete the survey. Once completed, please put your completed survey in the enclosed self-</p>

addressed, stamped envelope.

IF YOU PREFER to complete the survey online, the survey is also available at websiteaddress@surveymonkey.org.

All responses are anonymous. However, the results of all returned surveys will be combined and given to your farmer.

I am also looking for volunteers who would be willing to be interviewed about their CSA experience. This interview (which you may choose to handle via phone or in person) will take 30-60 minutes. If you would be willing to talk about your CSA experience, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed below.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 612.xxx.xxxx or xxxxxxx@stthomas.edu.

Thank you for your participation,

Specify what measures you will take to eliminate potential coercion. *Be specific*

FARMERS: I will be sending farmers that I have met at Spring CSA Fairs in the Twin Cities an email and a hardcopy letter (see above) with a description of my topic and research plans. If I do not receive a response from the farmer(s) within seven days, I will send a follow up email. If I do not receive a response to the follow up email, I will drop the farmer from my list of recruits. This leaves the farmer with an "easy out" if they decide that they do not wish to participate in my study.

SHAREHOLDERS: Shareholders will be recruited ONLY via a returned paper survey that will be included with participating farmers' distribution boxes. If the shareholder does not return the survey with their name and contact information, the shareholder will never be contacted by me.

Will you have access to existing records in order to recruit?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-----	--------------------------	----	-------------------------------------

If **YES**, indicate who gave approval to use the records. Approval must be given by an individual who has the authority to release the records. Attach a signed letter of approval from that individual, preferably on letterhead from their organization.

List the name of the person who has given approval to release the records.

NA

Will the participants receive incentives before and/or rewards after the study?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	-----	-------------------------------------	----	--------------------------

If **YES**, describe these incentives and/or rewards. Include this information in your consent form.

I anticipate a day or two of participant observation, so I will be asking to work for a day or two on the participating farms which may be construed as "free" labor. Since many CSA's request shareholders to participate in the work for a shift or two already this may or may not be seen as a benefit.

Appendix R

Original 2012 IRB Risks and Benefits

RISKS AND BENEFITS

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Risks and Benefits			
Please complete each section in clear, easy-to-read language that can be understood by a person unfamiliar with your research and your field.			
Minimize risk			
Describe the precautions used to minimize risks. This information must be listed here and on the consent form.			
<p>FARMERS: Farmer risks are limited to the possibility that I, as the researcher, might become aware of some trade secret or marketing ideas that, if disclosed to competitors, may reduce the effectiveness and/or usefulness of that idea.</p> <p>Any time a business owner allows his/her practices and procedures to be observed in detail there will always be a risk that something may be uncovered that, in the right context, may be considered "unflattering". There are no personal or privacy issues involved. This "unflattering" information may be related to how certain procedures are executed, etc. I do not anticipate any "unflattering" issues, but to not mention this possibility would be an incomplete evaluation of the risks (however minor) involved.</p> <p>To minimize this risk, all study participants will remain anonymous and I will not discuss other participating farms.</p> <p>SHAREHOLDERS: There are no risks for shareholder participants who voluntarily complete the anonymous survey or volunteer for in-depth interviews.</p>			
Use of Deception			
If this research involves the use of deception as part of the experimental method, the method MUST include a "debriefing procedure" which will be followed upon completion of the study or subject's withdrawal from the study. Specify the method here.			
Deception will not be used.			
Benefits to participation			
List any anticipated <u>direct</u> benefits for subjects that participate in this research project. This does not include statements like "add to the existing knowledge" or "assisting your school/agency/company, etc." If there are no benefits, state "None". List this information here and in the consent form.			
<p>FARMERS: Farmer participants will receive an aggregated copy of the survey results at the completion of my study.</p> <p>SHAREHOLDERS: There are no direct benefits for shareholder participants.</p>			

Appendix S

Original 2012 IRB Lay Summary

LAY SUMMARY

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Lay Summary			
Please complete each section in clear, easy-to-read language that can be understood by a person unfamiliar with your research and your field. Written correctly, sections of this summary can be used in your consent form.			
Background			
Provide <u>ONE</u> paragraph to explain the importance of the research and how it fits with previous research in the field.			
I intend to study the concept of community in Community Supported Agriculture. When the first Community Supported Agriculture farms began in 1986 the concept of "community" was the central idea. Since 1986 the CSA model and marketplace has changed in many ways including changes in the market place, changes in consumer ideas about organic/locally-grown food, and the introduction of internet communications for CSA's. The role and/or significance of community in this new environment has not been studied. Although I found many articles and dissertations about CSA farms, none of the studies have looked at the concept of community and how it has changed.			
Research Methods and Questions			
Specify the overall research question(s), hypothesis, methods you will use to address the research question(s).			
Be sure to attach copies of ALL materials to be used in the study to your project (such as surveys, interview questions, dependent measures, and so forth).			
I will be looking at both farmers' and shareholders' visions and ideas about "community" as part of the relationship in which they participate.			
FARMERS: I plan to use some time on the farm for participant observation. I will talk to the farmer before I visit the farm to see how he/she prefers the interview to be conducted. If the farmer prefers a sit-down interview before the work day begins or after the work day ends, I will accommodate those preferences. I anticipate, but do not know, that in most cases the farmer will elect to complete these interviews "in the field." (See attached addendum for response to concerns raised regarding working on the farm.) See attached list of interview questions. I will also request that the farmer allow me to include a quantitative survey in the weekly CSA distribution.			
SHAREHOLDERS: I will use a quantitative shareholder survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This survey will be included in the weekly CSA distribution to all shareholders of participating farms. The			

survey will also include a request for one-on-one interviews with CSA shareholders. All interviews will be done with shareholders who volunteer as part of returning the anonymous survey (see attached survey and recruitment letter and questions).

Expectations of Participants

State precisely what you will have participants do.

Identify the location of data collection and the expected time commitment of participants.

Farmers - All research will be done on the farms during participant observations. I will arrange the preferred interview format with farmers prior to my arrival on the farm. If farmers opt for a sit-down interview, I will arrange a time before the beginning or at the end of the work day. If farmers opt for a working interview I will conduct the interview while working. (See attached addendum for response to concerns raised regarding working on the farm.) The day will be recorded and transcribed.

I will be asking farmers to send an email to their shareholders (see attached letter) introducing my study and letting shareholders know that the farm is participating in my study. I will also ask the farmer to allow me to include a quantitative survey with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in their CSA distribution boxes for one week. Farmers will pre-approve all survey questions.

Shareholders - I plan to include a paper survey with a self-addressed/stamped envelope in shareholder boxes. The paper survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. With the paper survey, I will also include a request for volunteers to participate in an in-depth interview about the CSA experience. Phone interviews will be conducted with interview volunteers. These interviews will take 10-15 minutes depending on the volubility of the participant. The confidentiality agreement will be emailed to the participant (and returned) prior to the telephone interview.

If no contact information is returned with the survey by the shareholder, the returned survey will be anonymous.

Analysis of Existing Data

If you are analyzing existing data, records or specimens, explain the source and type, as well as your means of access to them.

NA

Appendix T

Original 2012 IRB Informed Consent Process

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Informed Consent			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simply giving a consent form to a subject does <u>not</u> constitute informed consent. Consent itself is a process of communication. ▪ Be sure all required consent forms are attached to your project. ▪ In addition to consent forms, assent forms are required if your subjects are children ages 10 and older. ▪ All forms are located in the document library. 			
Describe Study			
In a script, state what you will say to the prospective participant describing your study.			
<p>FARMER: I am doing a research project looking at the concept of community in community supported agriculture and how (or if) it has changed. I am looking for CSA farmers who are willing to allow me to work with them and their shareholders and try to understand how or if the idea of community is still an important part of the CSA relationship. Study participation would include an on-farm interview talking about your concept of community, CSA's and your ideas about the future of community supported agriculture .</p> <p>If you choose to participate, in order to get the shareholder perspective, I would also request that you send an email to your shareholders letting them know that you are participating in this study and allow me to include a written survey (which you will see/approve ahead of time) in their weekly CSA box.</p> <p>I want to respect your work schedule and I want to make sure you know this is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate.</p> <p>Depending on your schedule (and mine), ideally everything should be completed in 1-2 days. Would you be interested in participating in this study?</p> <p>SHAREHOLDER: I would not be talking to the shareholders UNLESS the shareholder had returned a written survey and volunteered for the one-on-one interview.</p> <p>Thank you for returning your survey and vounteering to participate in my study. I am doing a research project looking at the concept of community in community supported agriculture and how it has changed. I am particularly interested in your views/ideas about community and how your ideas about community impact your CSA membership and participation. The interview would be a telephone interview and could take anywhere from 10-15 minutes. Of course, this is all on a strictly voluntary basis and you are free to discontinue your participation or our interview at any time. Would you still be</p>			

interested in participating in this study?

Participant Questions

What questions will be asked to assess the participant's understanding of his/her participation in your research? Identify 3-5 open-ended questions (not "yes/no" questions) that address procedures, risks (if any), confidentiality and voluntariness.

SHAREHOLDER: Thank you for returning your survey and volunteering to participate in the interview portion of my study. This is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation. The interview will probably take 10-15 minutes. I will be emailing you to arrange a time for a telephone conversation about your CSA experience. This telephone conversation will be recorded. How does that sound to you?

SHAREHOLDER: During our interview I will be asking about your CSA experience and asking for more details about some of your responses on your survey. What are the topics, if any, that you would consider most important for me to cover during our interview?

FARMER: If you choose to participate in this study, I will be emailing you to arrange a time for an interview on your farm. That interview could be a sit-down interview or an "in the field" interview. Which type of interview would you prefer?

FARMER: I am studying the concept of "community" as part of community supported agriculture. What are the topics that you would consider most important for us to talk about during our interview?

FARMER: I know that farming is a 12-month job, but the summer and fall are especially busy. How much time do you think you would have available to talk with me about your farm and what you do?

Obtaining Consent

At what point in the research process will consent be obtained? Be specific.

FARMERS: Consent forms will be emailed to the farmer before going to the farm for the participant observations and I will request that the form be completed before the start of the participant observations.

SHAREHOLDERS: I have included a one-page consent form with the anonymous survey and IF a shareholder volunteers for a more in-depth interview, consent forms will be emailed to the shareholders and I will ask that the consent forms be emailed back to me prior to the scheduled interview.

Will the investigator(s) personally secure informed consent for all subjects?

Yes



No



If **NO**, identify below the individuals who will obtain consent (include job title/credentials):

--

Appendix U

Original 2012 IRB Confidentiality of Data Form

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

Project Name	Small Farmers & Supported Agriculture: Building Community or Creating a Commodity?		
Researcher Name	Connie Everson	IRB Tracking Number	331276-1
Confidentiality of Data			
Please completely answer each question in clear, easy to read language. As with the lay summary, the information in this section should be used in your consent form. It is extremely important that all information obtained from your participants be kept as confidential as possible.			
Data formats			
In what format(s) will the data be created? <i>Check all that apply</i>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consent Forms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Audio Recordings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Video Recordings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Surveys	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transcripts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Written Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
Data storage			
Where will each form of data you create and records be kept? Specify the setting where the data will be kept (e.g. home, work, school, etc.), and indicate how the data will be made secure (e.g. kept in a locked file in a locked room, secured password computer. etc.).			
All notes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet at _____ in Minneapolis. All transcripts and notes will use pseudonyms for the farms and the interviewees. In the case that the notes are lost, the notes will be almost entirely in shorthand and not readable by anyone else. All transcripts stored on my computer will be secured with facial recognition security.			
Data Retention			
How long will the data and records be kept? Specify the exact date when the data and records will be destroyed. If the data and records are to be kept indefinitely, specify how they will be de-identified.			
Data will be retained until August 31, 2015. At that point all transcripts with any identifying information will be destroyed.			
Data Access			
Who will have access to the data and records? Will data identifying the subjects be available to anyone other than the principal investigator (e.g. school officials, research advisors, etc.)? List these people in the Consent Form as well.			
The only other individual with access to any identifiable information in addition to myself as principal investigator will be my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. John Holst.			

Data transcription				
Will information from the data be transcribed?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES , please explain who will transcribe any information from this media and where it will be stored. If the researcher is not the person transcribing the media, attach a Statement of Confidentiality from the transcriber to your project.				
All transcription will be done by the researcher and will be stored on my home computer which is secured by facial recognition. A weekly backup will also be stored in a locked safe at _____ in Minneapolis.				
Will the data be recorded in any permanent record, such as a medical chart or student file?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES , please explain				