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Community Supported Agriculture as Revitalization

Reconnecting the Farm and the Dinner Table

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Spring 2008

Abstract: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) was created in response to consumers' concerns about food safety and quality. However, it is more than just a way to get your groceries: CSA represents an attempt to completely reform the way Americans eat by forging a direct link between the farm and the dinner table, and in so doing refute the anonymous, industrial food production system that rose to prominence in the 20th century. In achieving these goals, CSA has taken on the form and aims of a revitalization movement as originally conceived by Anthony Wallace in 1956. Even though the revitalization model has traditionally been used to study spiritual movements of indigenous origin, its framework is equally applicable to a secular Western movement like CSA. By using Wallace's model we can trace the social and historical development of the movement and also shed light on the factors that have both contributed to its success and limited its growth. Furthermore, using Wallace's model in this way is the first step in directly comparing the history, goals, and membership of CSA with similar social movements as well as exploring more general questions about the future of sustainable agriculture in America.

Introduction

The following responses, along with about 400 others, came to my door as part of a survey I conducted of Michigan's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) customers in the summer of 2007. The original question was, "Why did you decide to join the CSA in the first place?"

"I thought it would be great for my children to learn about farming and gardening and to understand where food comes from."

"I wanted more organic produce and food that hasn't traveled halfway around the world!"

"I am concerned with the link between food, health, and the environment; [I] read books by Goodall, Carson, and Kingsolver to find CSAs."

Other respondents "wanted cleaner food and to support local farmers," or "liked [the] concept of being part of a farm without actually being a farm," or wanted "the opportunity to support local farms during tough economic times in Michigan."

None of the responses caught my attention as much as these: "In northern Michigan, I am aware of CSA members who mainly join out of fear, as our food supply is not to be trusted," and similarly, "the more I learned about conventional foods the more I realized how dangerous they are."

Common to all of these responses is a concern with farming and fresh produce. Beyond that, all suggest a disconnect between the two "halves" of food: the source and the dinner table. CSA was developed to bridge this gap: equal parts marketing technique and social network, CSA is designed to secure a regular supply of fresh, locally grown vegetables for consumers and a more equitable wage for small producers, while at the same time integrating urbanites and other non-farmers into rural life (Adam 2006, 1-3).

The CSA model has become quite popular. In Michigan, the number of CSA farms skyrocketed from approximately ten in the late 1990s to almost 70 in the summer of 2007. Nationally, the number of CSAs has doubled from around 600 in 1996 (Van En 1996, xvi) to about 1,200 in 2006, reaching an estimated 300,000 families each week (Adam 2006, 4).

I wanted to know why people in Michigan were joining CSAs. Through my survey, I learned that most were interested in fresh produce, helping a local small farmer, and protecting the environment. CSA crops are grown organically and distributed weekly, which addresses both culinary and ecological concerns. And farmers actually do benefit from CSA, too: outside of CSA, the interest on loans needed for farming supplies cut into any profits that farmer might generate. In CSA though, the farmer is presented with interest-free money at the beginning of the season as well as a ready-made market for their produce. This isn't a perfect system, though. Members are essentially purchasing an agricultural futures contract - if the crops fail, you are out of luck. Nevertheless, this concept of shared risk is a hallmark of CSA.

I was surprised to see a good number of people indicating that their CSA membership was a social statement, too. For them, CSA is about more than just fresh vegetables and economics. In an age of unprecedented consumer choice, CSA sticks out as a unique alternative to the supermarket because it focuses not only on *what* is produced, but also *how* it is done. Its increasing popularity in turn-of-the-millennium America indicates that many people have problems with agriculture and food systems in this country, and so are willing to take on the additional risks and costs of CSA membership not only to procure their groceries, but also to take a stand against a food system that they find fault in.

Is CSA a Social Movement?

What are consumers dissatisfied with? Some people might be concerned about food

safety, prompted by recent scares over salmonella and the spinach crop or the potential links between processed foods and heart disease or cancer. Many are worried about biodiversity, "food miles", algae blooms in the Gulf of Mexico, and the potentially dangerous side effects of pesticides and fertilizers on human health. Others question the changes in the rural landscape, where there are fewer farms (and farmers) than ever before. All of these taken together reflect the discomfort many feel over an industrial food system which has transformed the farm from a "living organism" into a factory.

Central to these concerns is the notion that food and subsistence are critical aspects of both personal health and shared culture that people engage, negotiate, and define many times a day. Grocery stores like Whole Foods and Fresh Market have exploded in popularity as people have responded to the concerns outlined above. While CSA addresses those same concerns, we should not label CSA as "just another consumer alternative" for those worried about the food supply, because there are fundamental differences between CSA and the grocery store, even a specialty outlet like Whole Foods. CSA's structure emphasizes the local provenance of food, consumer input, and shared risks of agriculture in ways that Whole Foods (et al.) does not, and so goes a step further in addressing consumers' concerns. Indeed, by studying the development and goals of the CSA concept, we see that CSA is not simply about groceries, but also about reconnecting farming and eating in a very direct way. The precise means of doing this are best illustrated by examining CSA in light of the 1956 revitalization movement model first suggested by Anthony F.C. Wallace.

In this paper, I will demonstrate how Wallace's framework for revitalization applies to CSA in America by tracing the history and development of this movement in the context of Wallace's original outline. I hope to show that the American CSA movement is basically

revitalistic in style, scope, and aim. The ultimate goals of this paper are to demonstrate the usefulness of Wallace's revitalization model in helping us to understand and classify secular social movements in modern Western society while also illustrating that CSA in America is but one symptom of a growing dissatisfaction with industrial systems and the lopsided power relationships they generate.

What is a Revitalization Movement?

Anthony F.C. Wallace's article "Revitalization Movements" (1956) outlines the underlying processes common to social movements from world religions to the Communist Revolution (277): all can be understood as an attempt at "revitalization". According to Wallace's definition, revitalization is any "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." (1956, 265) He argues that the effort to construct a new culture is linked to failures of the old culture in meeting the needs of its constituents. More specifically, he suggests that while immediate physical needs may be satisfactorily met, spiritual, emotional, or intellectual needs may go unaddressed, resulting in "stress" (1956, 266).

Wallace proposes that "revitalization movements...are recurrent features in human history," sharing general features and patterns across time, space, and place (1956, 267). The revitalization movement is the product of a single individual who, after undergoing a period of serious stress, experiences a vision or other epiphany detailing a new social system designed to reduce or eliminate that stress. This prophet shares his or her vision, attracting a critical mass of followers who generate an organizational structure. This is important in sustaining momentum upon the death of the prophet and keeping the movement together during times of struggle or resistance. When the movement does encounter friction, adaptation is critical: it must either change or fail. The outcome of this stage determines whether the revitalization movement

continues to progress, becoming widespread and commonplace, or else it disintegrates. Taking a step back from the actual development of the movement, Wallace suggests a few major classifications that help us categorize and compare different revitalization movements: “the choice of identification; the choice of religious and secular means; nativism; and the success-failure continuum.” (1956, 275)

Wallace’s revitalization model has generally been used to analyze religious or spiritual movements in colonial situations. The example that most are familiar with is the Ghost Dance movement from the 19th-century, where Native Americans in the Dakotas sought to expel American settlers through ritual dance and wearing special clothing. Subsequent authors (Reich 1971, Howard 1976, Porterfield 1987, Thornton 1993, et al.) have tackled revitalization movements in similar historical settings, leading Wallace and others to wonder aloud whether or not the revitalization model can be effectively used to examine secular social change movements in the "belly of the beast", or the modern West (Wallace 2004, ix).

Critiques of the Revitalization Model, and Why I’m Using It

Wallace created the revitalization model at a time when a “systems” approach to social science was in vogue - scholars were trying to understand how the different parts of culture fit together (Wallace 2004, ix). This is evident in the fact that his model practically requires the use of an organismic analogy, where “culture” or “society” is understood as a whole made up of parts working together to maintain the status quo, much like the different organs of an animal or plant might. Implicit in his assertion is the notion that members of a society have a mental image of their culture and the ways in which the different parts fit together to meet a given need, a picture Wallace refers to as the “mazeway” (1956, 266). This rigidity is often cited as a flaw in his model, because it leaves little room for agency. However, Wallace points out that there are

always people in society who deal with stress in individual ways, even before the start of any kind of revitalization movement; it's just that these "deviants" do not make enough of an impact on other members of their society to bring about large-scale change. Furthermore, the revitalization model itself is loaded with instances where local conditions are accounted for and individuals can alter the path of the movement.

Another critique has been that the model, with its discrete phases and "scripted" quality, is too rule-driven to be applied to real people, and is overly focused on "explaining, rather than interpreting...human behavior." (Harkin 2004, xviii) This, again, is partially a function of the era in which the model was generated, which emphasized general rules and theories across cultures, but at the same time this criticism is an important caveat for anyone wanting to use the revitalization model. Too literal an implementation will reveal at best a distorted picture of the subject matter; as such, it is best considered a guide rather than a concrete map.

A corollary to this criticism is the charge that the model is too sweeping in scope: "it possesses the once-admired classical virtue of holism, which is often taken today as intellectual hubris." (Harkin 2004, xviii) There is much to be said for using a narrow theoretical perspective to examine a given problem, because you can achieve much in terms of depth. However, there is also a great deal of value in breadth, especially for something that purports to change an entire culture. One could definitely write about CSA from strictly political, economic, ecological, or social perspectives. However, I want to use the revitalization model to look at the relationships between these different forces: how ecological factors lead to the development of new and different types of farms, for instance, or how social factors that were adopted and promoted by some of the movement's early adherents were later dropped for economic reasons. I think it is better to approach a multi-faceted subject like CSA with a theoretical framework that has the

explanatory power to address them all because it gives us a more balanced look at CSA as a movement, as opposed to an economic, political, social, or ecological phenomenon.

CSA and the Revitalization Model

The vocabulary of revitalization movements has an overtly religious tone: "prophets", "disciples", "visions", "epiphanies", and "revivals" all have their place in Wallace's model. Furthermore, revitalization movements have thus far been examined almost exclusively in the context of minority (generally indigenous) groups living under colonial rule. With this in mind, can we still use this lexicon to describe a secular, Western-derived movement like CSA?

The analogies, imagery, and ideas that have religious overtones in revitalization theory are still applicable to CSA if we substitute consumers' concerns about fresh produce, helping a local farmer, protecting the environment, and social change for the considerations of spirituality or salvation that generally take the spotlight. That's not to say that temporal concerns outweigh spiritual ones, but rather that the two can be made equivalent for the purposes of employing the revitalization model. Wallace argues in his 1956 article that religions are revitalization movements in which the ultimate goal is spiritual redemption or admission to eternal life (267); similarly, CSA is a revitalization movement in which the ultimate goal is ethically- and environmentally-sound food. By substituting one "ultimate goal" for another, we are able to employ Wallace's revitalization model beyond its traditional uses, and so apply it to secular social movements.

The majority of revitalization movements are of indigenous or otherwise non-Western origin, springing from situations of colonial control. CSA, in contrast, is a movement with roots in the developed West. This, however, does not preclude it from existing in a colonial context. Though certainly not battling direct foreign control, Westerners involved in CSA contend with

very real neo-colonial forces in which terms of sale and production are dictated to consumers without their input. As in historical instances of colonialism, raw materials in the neo-colonial structure are extracted in one place, finished in another, and sold in a third, and many times elites in a fourth location reap the benefits. As such:

...the colonialist model may apply to the mentalité of contemporary revitalization movements in large polities, even though an objective evaluation of the economic, political, and military situation denies them colonial status. Colonialist fears may be psychologically true for revitalizers...(Wallace 2004, xi)

Because of their radical nature, revitalization movements have often been presented as an element of the cultural fringe. In his 1956 article Wallace proposes that revitalization movements occur first among people who have been excluded from making the decisions that shape culture and daily life, and as such “revitalization movements may appear as primitive rebellions of the lower classes or counter-revolutionary conspiracies of defeated elites” (Wallace 2004, ix). The revitalization movement is at its most basic level a reaction to powerlessness, and not only represents the interests of people who have *always* been without power in a given system, but also those who have *recently lost* power because of the imposition of a new system (Martin 2004, 68). CSA represents the concerns and frustrations of people who are relatively powerless with regards to the decisions about what kinds of food are produced and how; farmers and consumers alike who in an era of unprecedented choices still have trouble making their voices heard. In this way, CSA is an example of a revitalization movement with uniquely Western origins, taking place in developed countries but nevertheless rooted in a colonial setting.

Wallace’s revitalization model is helpful for studying social movements because it gives us the opportunity to trace the development of that movement through time, as well as many opportunities to pause and reflect on the changes that have taken shape. I will now attempt to

relate the history of the CSA movement according to each stage in Wallace's model, of which there are five: The Steady State, The Period of Increased Individual Stress, The Period of Cultural Distortion, The Period of Revitalization (having six phases itself - where most of the action takes place), and The New Steady State. The first three stages are concerned largely with providing the social and historical contexts for CSA in America. The opening phases of the Period of Revitalization explore the rise and current state of the movement, and the final phases of The Period of Revitalization and The New Steady State are where I will make my predictions about the future status of CSA in America.

Stage One - The Steady State

Wallace tells us that the "Steady State" is the time leading up to the revitalization movement, when "culturally recognized techniques for satisfying needs operate with such efficiency that chronic stress within the system varies within tolerable limits." (1956, 268) Most people are getting along without major problems, and the "stress" that they face in their lives, whether financial, spiritual, or otherwise, is dealt with using means common to their particular cultural situation. In short, the Steady State is the way things are (or were), and provides us with the necessary historical and social context we need to study the revitalization movement.

Economic history since the mid-17th century is arguably the story of industrialization and the crusade to maximize efficiency. While generally associated with factories and heavy industry, the industrial revolution took its first steps in the fields of Europe and her colonies, as investors and absentee land-lords sought to increase land holdings and maximize yield in order to turn a higher profit (Mintz 1986). While the technology has changed in 350 years, farms stretching back as far as 17th-century Barbados might best be portrayed as outdoor factories demanding intensive (now mechanized) labor, and chemical inputs to produce a single crop. The

crop in those days may have been sugar cane, but since then has been tobacco, tea, coffee, and more recently corn, soybeans, and cotton. Agriculture came to benefit from “economies of scale”, and so landholdings were consolidated with the upshot being small- and medium-sized farmers forced off the land. With fewer farmers around, people looked to intermediary sources for food.

Resistance to this industrial model of farming is also quite old. In America, with the dawn of “manufactured” bread produced from refined white flour in the 1830s came the opposition of the Grahamites, a religious and natural-health group. The Grahamites “believed that white bread...was detrimental to health...and led to the decline of moral character...as opposed to the wholesome home-prepared foods of subsistence agriculture.” (Cone and Kakaliouras 1995, 28) They offered an alternative, the Graham Cracker, not only for health reasons, but also as a direct challenge to the increasing influence of an industrial, mechanized food production system. While the Grahamite movement itself lost steam, the precedent was set for those who wanted to challenge the way food was made in America.

The “Steady State”, then, for our discussion of the CSA movement is one of increasing production efficiency and consolidated landholdings. Consumers are not only less likely to be farmers themselves because of the vast capital needed to compete in the global market, but also less likely to have influence over what is produced in their communities. Contrary to the pre-industrial era of agriculture, in which many farmers worked small plots of land for subsistence purposes, people now look to third parties that are “culturally recognized” as institutions for dealing with their food-related needs, like the supermarket or fast food outlet.

Stages Two and Three - The Period of Increased Individual Stress and The Period of Cultural Distortion

The next section of Wallace's outline for revitalization movements, the "Period of Increased Individual Stress" looks at the moment in which individuals begin to question the logic of the dominant cultural system. In other words,

Over a number of years, individual members of a population...experience increasingly severe stress as a result of the decreasing efficiency of [their culture]. The culture may remain essentially unchanged or it may undergo considerable changes, but in either case there is continuous diminution in its efficiency in satisfying needs. The agencies responsible for interference with the efficiency of a cultural system are various...(Wallace 1956, 269)

After World War II, American factories that had produced bombs and gunpowder were converted to generate nitrogen-based fertilizers, and chemical-warfare scientists shifted their attention from weapons to agricultural pesticides (McIlvaine-Newsad et al. 2004, 150). Along with other advances, this ushered in an era of unprecedented crop yields and seemingly limitless progress with regards to what humans could grow, where they could grow it, and how cheaply they could grow it for. Industrial farms expanded further, eager to cash in on the new technologies:

...in the United States from 1940 to 1992, the number of farms decreased by 75% and the ownership of farms declined by 50%. Yet, during the same time period the average size of farms increased three fold. (McIlvaine-Newsad et al. 2004, 151)

While the industrial model had been employed for almost 300 years, Americans (save the Grahamites) had let it proceed largely unquestioned. Post WWII though, people became duly concerned over its side effects on human health, environmental conditions, and American culture more generally. According to Cynthia Abbot Cone and Ann Kakaliouras:

[a] natural foods orientation in the United States reemerged sometime in the 1950s...The urban consumer's source for these

goods were health food stores and co-op markets, places where food was more likely to be sold in bulk... These sources also made a point of offering the choice of organically grown products, free of petroleum-based fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides... (1995, 28)

Rachel Carson's timeless *Silent Spring* acted as a catalyst for those who moved to resist the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, including their use in agricultural situations, and thereby served as a useful starting point "during the 1970s and 1980s [for] an agricultural sustainability movement that focused on the social and environmental externalities associated with modern agricultural technologies." (Kloppenburger et al. 2000, 178)

As such, they entered the third stage of Wallace's revitalization process, the "Period of Cultural Distortion". "In this phase, the culture is internally distorted; the elements are not harmoniously related but are mutually inconsistent and interfering." (Wallace 1956, 269)

America's role as an agricultural power with the family farm at its core is often part of the romantic image that many Americans have of their country. For those experiencing the cultural distortion phase however, the modern-day industrial plantations that dominate American agriculture had smashed that image and broken the link between the farm and the dinner table that was once quite common. In addition to the health dangers of chemicals and petroleum-based products being used on food, many started to question the logic of large landholdings, highly mechanized labor, and ecologically-unfriendly production techniques like monocropping, as well as the social justice issues surrounding high land prices and food insecurity. Out of this cultural distortion came a movement proposing to challenge the industrial system, eschewing petrochemicals in favor of ecological responsibility while at the same time regenerating the links between local farms and local consumers - CSA.

Stage Four - The Period of Revitalization (In Six Steps)

1. "Mazeway Reformation"

The revitalization process begins with a prophet. "Whether the movement is religious or secular, the reformation...seems to depend on a restructuring of elements and subsystems which have already attained currency in the society...and which are known to the person who is to become the prophet or leader." (1956, 270) This prophet, according to Wallace's outline, experiences a "moment of insight, a brief period of realization of relationships and opportunities," and after this epiphany "feels a need to tell others of his experience...[showing] evidence of a radical inner change...being the occasion of a new synthesis of values and meanings." (Wallace 1956, 270-271) CSA, too, had a prophet, though in somewhat modified form: the prophet of the American CSA movement did not originate the concept. Yet, under her guidance, the CSA idea was initiated in America and then adapted to local conditions.

Processed foods, strawberries in December, and excess packaging have all disconnected food from its source. People who were involved in the development of CSA already knew about these particular "elements and subsystems" of food production that had "gained currency" in their particular cultural context, and were dissatisfied with them. According to the growing body of literature on the subject, the CSA farm was born in Japan in the mid-1960s. On the outskirts of Tokyo, "farmer-consumer relations known as teikei were formed to create reliable sources for safe, reasonably priced food." (Imhoff 1996, 430) The very first CSA farmer, a Mr. Ohira, "resumed his former organic cultivation practices...when his health was threatened by the petrochemicals he was using." (Imhoff 1996, 430) Unfortunately, Ohira was not able to compete with the massive, industrial producers who provided food to Tokyo's grocery stores, and was forced to find another way to survive financially. Luckily for him, "some of his neighbors realized the uncompensated value of these clean farming practices, [and] decided to create a

system that would guarantee consistent demand for [his] product so that he could focus on his specialty - raising organic crops.” (Imhoff 1996, 430) They decided to pay Mr. Ohira in advance for an entire season’s worth of produce.

While it is not clear whether or not Ohira’s work in Japan was an influence, Trauger Groh, a German farmer and early advocate of sustainable agriculture, opened a CSA in what was then West Germany in the 1970s (Imhoff 1996, 430). In addition to the produce, Groh was also keen on the idea of preserving small-scale farms, and worked to secure funding from “progressive [banks] dedicated to keeping small farmers on the land.” (Imhoff 1996, 431) Not too long after that in nearby Switzerland, a CSA feeding about 400 families opened in Zurich, offering food produced on a nearby farm (Imhoff 1996, 431). From here, the CSA concept jumped to America.

Robyn Van En moved to western Massachusetts in the early 1980s hoping to become a Kindergarten teacher. Originally from California, Van En had “for years cultivated a vegetable plot” as well bouquet flowers and stock for landscaping companies (Van En 1996, xiii-xiv).

After joining a local co-op near her new home, she made several discoveries:

I found out that most of the buying club members had their own summer gardens, but went to distant farms or the supermarket for their winter vegetables. Why shouldn’t I grow those storage crops? At a coop [sic] meeting, people said they would buy anything I grew, so I planted accordingly. By planting primarily potatoes, carrots, onions, garlic, and winter squash, I had fairly good returns, with my market ready and waiting, but I still carried all of the capitalization expenses, all of the work, and all of the risk.

I spent long periods...trying to formulate a better way to oblige both the grower and the eaters. The better way would be something cooperative; an arrangement that would allow people to draw upon their combined abilities, expertise, and resources for the mutual benefit of all concerned. 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.

In the middle of my second growing season, as I pondered this agricultural conundrum, Jan Vandertuin visited the farm. He had recently returned to New England from Switzerland and was anxious to share the experience he'd had working with a couple of farmers there. These farmers had asked their regular customers to pay a share of the farm's annual production expenses in exchange for a weekly share of the produce. Shares of the vegetables, meat, and dairy products were made available to them. After talking only a few minutes, Jan and I knew that we should do the same at Indian Line Farm. (1996, xiv)

Robyn Van En is the prophet of the American CSA movement. In addition to giving the concept its American name, Van En (along with Jan Vandertuin) sold her first CSA shares in the winter of 1986 and then traveled the country (as well as internationally) promoting the CSA concept, writing a number of books outlining her vision of CSA and how it could change the way Americans got food (Van En 1996, xiv-xvi).

That vision is made clear in the proposal for the very first CSA. Echoing the founding principles of the overseas operations mentioned above, Van En's American CSA called for healthy food, ecologically sound management, and sales to a local market. In this 1986 manifesto, Van En proposed a CSA that would "respect the animate Earth," wild and domesticated creatures / plants, and environmental cycles and limits; use organic or biodynamic farming methods, little to no mechanized labor, and offer living wages for employees; "support community control of the land" involving special status for agricultural lands; and create "local social/economic forms based on trust, which...share the risks of agricultural production...are human-scale, and charge according to needs/cost (not market)" (Henderson 1999, 19). In contrast to her European and Japanese counterparts though, Van En pushed the ideal of a small-scale farm serving only a limited number of households, with the hope that farm members would be actively involved in the day-to-day operations. Although she had by now attracted enough

members for the first few CSAs to get off the ground, Van En wanted to spread the word to even more people and farms across the country.

2 & 3: Communication and Organization

After the prophet has his or her moment of clarity, he or she is bound to tell others about the new ideas. Fundamental to the very nature of revitalization movements is the belief that enacting those radical ideas will produce great change. According to Wallace, “both [the prophet] and his society will benefit materially from an identification with some definable new cultural system.” (1956, 273) “Converts are made by the prophet. Some undergo hysterical seizures...some experience an ecstatic vision in private circumstances; some are convinced by more or less rational arguments, some by considerations of expediency and opportunity.” (Wallace 1956, 273) The second and third stages of Wallace’s revitalization process have two main goals: attracting more followers and creating an organizational structure. These are complementary: once a critical mass of adherents is attained, Wallace says that “the action program from here on is effectively administered in large part by a political...leadership,” meaning that the day-to-day affairs of the movement are no longer handled directly by the prophet (1956, 273). This is key to continued growth, as “the movement itself is liable to die with the death or failure of individual prophet, king, or war lord.” (Wallace 1956, 274)

Along these lines, Van En provided the following pitch for the advantages of CSA membership:

CSA strives to provide fair compensation to the farmer while encouraging proper land stewardship, maintaining agricultural integrity, strengthening local economy, linking consumers with producers, and providing nutritious products for the participating community members. The goal of CSA is to make wholesome (usually organic) foods, grown and distributed in an economically

viable and ecologically responsible manner, accessible and widely available to community members. Direct sales to CSA members avoids the 'middlemen,' thereby allowing small farms to obtain a better price for produce than by competing on the wholesale market with larger, distant farms, and the CSA members are able to obtain organic food at prices often lower than in a health food store or supermarket. CSA also allows members to become personally connected to their food source, and thus better appreciate the role food production plays in their lives, and how organic farming can protect the ecosystem...CSA encourages members to work actively in various aspects of the farming operation: planting, weeding, harvesting, packing boxes of produce, delivery, and administration. (1997, 115-116)

The CSA movement is an attempt to revitalize the direct, tangible link between food producers and consumers. In so doing, the system is touted as being both ecologically responsible and universally accessible. To that end, CSA is an important tool in reconstructing community networks on both social and economic levels: Van En suggests that CSA membership can help individual consumers reconnect with both "the land" and the food production process.

In addition to personally traveling to many other farms in the American northeast, Van En wrote a book (Basic Formula to Create Community Supported Agriculture) outlining the legal, economic, and technical aspects of running a CSA. Van En was tireless in her efforts to attract both new members and new farmers. In this she was quite successful: starting from the original CSA at Indian Line Farm in 1986, Van En inspired approximately 600 other CSAs before her death in 1997 (Adam 2006, 4). Despite the loss, CSA maintained its momentum thanks to the books, newspaper articles, and perhaps most importantly, word-of-mouth anecdotes and recommendations about the benefits of CSA.

Anthropologist Wendy Reich has suggested that folklore plays a major role in the growth and eventual success or failure of revitalization movements (1971). She describes folklore as

“patterned, verbal expression,” encompassing everything from songs, myths, and legends to gossip and “stories everyone believes true;” basically, “verbalized belief as repeated and shared by all the members of the society” (1971, 234). During times of social transformation, as in a revitalization movement, “folklore operates instrumentally to help members of the society adapt to changing circumstances.” (1971, 234) In the case of CSA, we can see the promotional pamphlets, flyers, and quotations from CSA operators offering a near verbatim repetition of Van En’s claims about the goals and benefits of CSA. From one CSA in Maine:

Community Supported Agriculture provides a mutually beneficial arrangement between farmer and community... The goal of CSA is to reconnect people with the land that sustains them. Shareholders know how and where the food they eat is grown, and they can learn to understand the complexities of providing this food.

Joining a CSA leads to greater awareness of our interdependence on one another and the land. It helps ensure the survival of rural life. Our farm has the ability to grow and provide food for a number of families while pursuing proper land stewardship. (Goranson Farm, 1999)

Another CSA in Oregon makes a similar statement:

To further our vision of becoming ‘a farm in balance with the earth, humanity, and ourselves,’ we want to build the link between ourselves and the people who eat the food we produce and to help reestablish the role of agriculture in the community. We seek to provide an environment where families can strengthen their connection to the earth that sustains them. We believe that it makes more sense to grow food for the local community than for distant markets. By joining, you receive fresh, locally grown vegetables and have a direct connection to the farm and the people growing food for you. If you like, you can come and get your hands in the soil, walk the farm, or attend our farm events. In many ways, the most important reason for any of us to be involved with the Community Farm is that *it is an affirmation of the kind of world we want to live in*. It is a positive choice for the future. (Winter Green Community Farm, 1999, *emphasis added*)

It would be inaccurate to suggest that the CSA movement in America ever had any sort of

rigid hierarchy with Robyn Van En at its head, dictating an official message. However, Van En's original arguments in favor of CSA had a universal appeal not only to the thousands of people who have signed up to be members of a CSA but also to the numerous farmers who have adopted the CSA model. In this way, the organization of members exists more as a network of believers rather than anything political. Despite growing popularity though, the CSA movement has not proceeded unchallenged. As any attempt to change the existing social structure might, the revitalization movement invariably encounters resistance.

4. Adaptation

In the face of opposition, Wallace says that "the movement may...have to use various strategies of adaptation: doctrinal modification; political and diplomatic maneuver; and force." (1956, 274) He continues:

In most instances the original doctrine is continuously modified...[responding to] various criticisms and affirmations by adding to, emphasizing, playing down, and eliminating selected elements of the original visions. This reworking makes the new doctrine more acceptable to special interest groups, may give it a better "fit" to the population's cultural and personality patterns, and may take account of the changes occurring in the general milieu. (1956, 274-275)

Community Supported Agriculture differs from other instances of revitalization movements in that it has not experienced resistance from the outside in the form of opposing legislation, police crackdowns, or anything of that sort. Rather, resistance to the CSA movement has been entirely internal, sourced primarily from members who are unhappy with some the ideals and structures found in Van En's original proposal. If the CSA movement were to fail, then, it would be because its constituents abandoned the idea on their own accord, not because it was crushed from the outside.

4a. Resistance

The results of my own research in Michigan and the results of similar studies undertaken in Massachusetts (Cooley and Lass 1998), New York (O'Hara and Stagl 2001), Ohio (Goland 2002), and Pennsylvania (Durrenberger 2002) suggest that the top three reasons why people join CSAs are out of a concern for the environment, the desire to support a local small farmer, and a desire for fresh, local, organic produce - all of which are mentioned frequently in the folkloric canon of the CSA movement.

With this in mind, perhaps the best way to approach the issue of resistance is by exploring the major reasons for why consumers choose to leave a CSA. My own research in Michigan and the results of those other studies indicate that many choose to leave their CSA because they see the logistics as being inconvenient or impractical or else because they do not perceive their membership as being a good value.

Van En's original plan for the American CSA was that every week, members would physically come to the farm and pick up their produce, possibly harvesting it themselves. From there, they would prepare it in any number of ways or else preserve it for later (Van En 1996, xv). For new members accustomed to the convenience of a grocery store, however, it may prove an unexpected burden to have to drive out to the farm on a particular day and time each week, collect your share, and then figure out what to do with unfamiliar vegetables and fruits. Some CSA researchers have said that this should be viewed as a positive - one of the ways CSA achieves its goal of reconnecting consumers to farms is by forcing members to clean, process, and manage fresh food themselves (Goland 2002, 15). However, the findings from a survey of CSA members in central Ohio indicate that this very same benefit may be one of the leading causes behind the membership turnover experienced by most CSAs - sometimes upwards of 50%

each season (Goland 2002, 17). An offshoot of this “convenience” issue is the fact that CSAs do not supply everything a household might need for a week, such as bread, dairy, meats, etc., and so members must head to the grocery store in addition to the farm. This can be a strong deterrent for members contemplating the renewal of their CSA membership, and may also factor into their consideration of the overall value of their share.

E. Paul Durrenberger explains the problem of value in a very insightful way:

In spite of the ideology of participating in a local food system and getting safe fresh food, members assess their membership in terms of whether they receive their money’s worth and farmers worry about whether they are giving members their money’s worth. (2002, 43)

With this in mind, Jack Cooley and Daniel Lass have shown that, even when accounting for regional variations in price, a CSA membership is cheaper than purchasing the same produce at a grocery store. “The comparison...is between the CSA share price (the cost per share that members pay) versus a retail value for the same amount of produce from an alternative source, such as a supermarket.” (1998, 230) They continue:

[The] retail value of each consumer’s share would be the retail value at the most likely alternative source for their produce. If the consumer seeks an alternative source of comparable organic produce, then the best estimate of their retail value would be the nearest natural or organic food store...we compute CSA share retail values for three different types of groceries: a national food chain selling mostly conventional produce; a regional chain selling both organic and conventional produce; and a local store that sells locally grown conventional produce. (1998, 230-231)

Despite the fact that in all cases CSA memberships actually cost less in comparison with the same produce purchased at a retail outlet, a sizeable chunk of CSA members still don’t see their membership as a good value, even though they are *more than* getting their money’s worth. My survey of Michigan CSA members indicates that approximately 22% of them are unsure about

whether or not their share represents a good use of their food dollar. Similar studies suggest that this can be chalked up to the fact that most CSAs provide too much food per share.

Durrenberger's study of CSA in central Pennsylvania reported that 79% of the CSA members he surveyed thought that they received too much food each week and felt wasteful for throwing it out or giving it away (2002, 46-47). While the food in a CSA share may cost less when computed on the whole, as Cooley and Lass did in their study, one must consider whether or not people would actually purchase the same amount of produce at a supermarket as they receive in their CSA share each week. The issue boils down to the fact that when CSA members throw away or otherwise don't use all of the food in their share, they feel as though they are throwing away money.

This issue extends to the production side of CSA, too. "The operator agonizes about how to put the concept of shared risk into practice. What happens when shortages are a result of farmer error?" (Durrenberger 2002, 43) Although Robyn Van En touted the idea of shared risk as a way to "[reduce] economic pressure on the farmer...[allowing] her or him to practice more ecologically sound methods," (1997, 119) it's not unrealistic to assume that no matter how large the membership base or earth-friendly the methods, a CSA experiencing significant crop failure would be a rather short-lived agricultural experiment indeed. Not providing any produce to the members, whether due to farmer error or a natural disaster risks the credibility and future financial security of the producer.

While many of the farmers I dealt with in the course of my research indicated that the CSA *idea* is very attractive because it shifts the focus of the operation back to farming (as opposed to finances, marketing, etc.), they have found through the *practice* of running a CSA that the added pressures of pleasing customers - in this sense, investors - is just as hard as the

idea is appealing. Additionally, turning a profit is still very difficult, especially in the first few growing seasons, when the membership base is small and not necessarily committed to staying with the farm for more than a season, and so the decision to operate a CSA, just like the decision to join or stay with a CSA, comes down to the question of getting value for one's money.

In the absence of external opposition, we see that the CSA movement has faced challenges largely from within, primarily from members and farmers dissatisfied with the structure of CSA. Concerns regarding the scheduling of share pickup and demands of food preparation along with doubtful outlooks on the value of CSA membership threaten to de-rail the movement from the inside out. Both of these points of resistance have the potential to erode a major proportion of the membership base, and thus halt CSA in its tracks. But, just like any revitalization movement that encounters resistance, CSA has modified some of its aims in order to stay alive.

4b. Modifications to the CSA Movement

Realizing that their customers' time may be scarce, more and more CSAs offer delivery to farmers' markets, workplaces, or even homes, complete with recipe suggestions for how to prepare the foods in that week's share (Adam 2006, 7-11). Responding to the fact that many customers have to make additional trips to the grocery store, some CSAs have started to offer additional products for sale when members come to the farm to pick up their share. Here is an example from a farm in Connecticut (Adam 2006, 10):

Diana will deliver her freshly baked breads, cookies, and pies to the farm on pick-up days each week for the twenty-week season.

1 loaf per week: \$75
2 loaves per week: \$140 [etc.]

We sell on a cash basis at the on-farm distributions a limited range

of products from other local farms that we do not produce ourselves. We hope this adds convenience for our members while supporting our neighbor farms.

Eggs from....

Honey from...

Maple syrup from... [etc.]

In trying to meet all the needs of their customers, this focus on “extras” shifts the emphasis of the CSA operation away from strictly farming and “sets CSA up as competitors in the retail food distribution system to which CSAs were created as alternatives.” (Durrenberger 2002, 43)

Questions about the value of a CSA membership have also been raised. Responding to members’ concerns about the amount of food in each share, some CSAs have moved away from the original distribution model in which everyone receives the same types of produce every week in favor of a “pick your own” system, allowing members to choose exactly what they’d like as well as the quantity (Adam 2006, 10). In so doing, consumers can still experiment with unfamiliar produce, but at a more comfortable level. This distribution system has the additional benefit of allowing the CSA to have more members, since each shareholder will probably claim less food each week, leaving more to go around to additional members.

On the production side of the value problem, it is evident by the rapid growth of CSAs that many farmers think it is worth their while to start one. Because the risk of failure is potentially high though, and giving customers exactly what they want is difficult, modifications to the original proposal have been made both to protect the farmer’s investment and encourage members to stay with the farm. As CSA has spread, three distinctive new forms have emerged, which address the value-related concerns of both producers and consumers.

Van En envisioned the CSA as an instrument for small farmers to stay on the land while serving a relatively limited local clientele. The first new CSA form is the opposite of this: the

large or even “industrial scale” CSA, the grandest of which provide weekly produce for upwards of 600 families (McFadden 1997, 84). Huge operations like this require mechanized farm equipment and lots of hired labor, but the expanded scale of a large CSA protects the farmer in case certain crops fail while also generating more income. A corollary to this is what I call the “add-on” CSA, in which an industrial farmer sets aside a few acres of land on which to operate a CSA along side traditional industrial crops like corn, soybeans, or tobacco. In both cases, the CSA may benefit from economies of scale in that the price per share is lower overall, but the number of members more than makes up.

The second new form is the specialized CSA. In my research in Michigan, I came across a “salad” CSA, which produced only lettuce, spinach, arugula, radishes, and the like. While obviously not enough to meet a household’s nutritional needs, this CSA nonetheless sold all of its shares for the season. Such a strategy may ease the transition of former industrial farmers into a CSA model, since it allows them to continue growing much of the same types of produce as before with some of the same equipment, thereby reducing their initial capital outlay and “hedging the bet” on whether or not their particular CSA will be successful. This kind of specialization opens the door for CSA partnerships in which smaller producers can band together to provide a wider array of produce to their pool of subscribers, which enhances value and reduces their need for extra trips to the grocery store.

The third new CSA form is known as a “subscription garden” (MOFFA 1999, 48). In this setup, members still receive what the farm produces once a week but without very much, if any, interaction with the farm or the farmer that would otherwise happen in the traditional CSA setup. Subscription garden operator Gregory Kruszewski writes:

It was never intended to be run by subscribers...It’s not a co-op.

You can call it community supported agriculture in the sense that there's shared risk, but otherwise it's organized like a small business where I'm the owner and operator and they are the customers. They're assuming some of the risk, but in return they are getting a good value. (MOFFA 1999, 48)

The produce in this example is also distributed from a different member's house each week, thereby reducing the workload of the farmer. While adhering literally to the goals of the CSA movement, so to speak, how faithful are these adaptations to Van En's original vision?

CSAs offering helpful advice on how to process and preserve produce certainly cannot hamper the major goal of reconnecting consumers with the food production process, nor can allowing them to select their own share each week. Large CSAs, although different in scope from what Robyn Van En had originally envisioned, still regenerate the links between the farm and the table by introducing consumers to where their food comes from; and besides, the original CSAs in Japan and Switzerland were fairly large, too (Imhoff 1996, 430-431). Specialized CSAs may provide a more accessible route to this mode of farming for those uncertain of its benefits; additionally, having specialist CSAs band together and sell produce to a combined pool of customers may reduce the overall risk of crop failure for members and a total loss for farmers. The goals of reconnecting consumers to producers as well as to the land are accomplished in all these instances.

On the other hand, delivery service and subscription gardens run counter to the original idea. Not taking an active role in the life of the farm, even through something as simple as physically going out to pick up one's produce each week, seems to be no different than buying food from a specialty supermarket. Value-added products, while possibly injecting cash into a CSA operation, run the risk, as Durrenberger says, of setting up CSAs as a direct competitor to retail food stores, something which would shift the focus away from the process of farming

(2002, 43). Finally, add-on CSAs may not hold true to the environmental standards originally suggested by Van En, resulting in sustained damage to the ecosystem as well as a continued emphasis on monocropping.

At any rate, adaptations to the original CSA prospectus have allowed the movement to reach more people than ever before. At this point, before I discuss the future outlook of the CSA movement through the final stages of Wallace's model, it is worthwhile to take a step back and characterize CSA in more general terms, so that we can try and understand it in the context of other revitalization movements.

[Classifications: "Varieties and Dimensions of Variation"]

Some of the more significant spins on the revitalization movement, according to Wallace, include "the choice of identification; the choice of secular and religious means; [and] nativism." (1956, 275) These categories help us to put the CSA movement in context with regards to other social movements, and also help to explain why the movement is appealing, beyond the proximate reasons already discussed.

Wallace suggests that revitalization movements identify themselves in one of three ways:

...movements which profess to revive a traditional culture now fallen into desuetude; movements which profess to import a foreign cultural system; and movements which profess neither revival nor importation, but conceive that the desired cultural end-state, which has never been enjoyed by ancestors or foreigners, will be realized for the first time in a future Utopia (1956, 275)

It is readily observable that the CSA movement purports to be a revival, returning its followers to an early state of producer-consumer familiarity. As Robyn Van En said, "...the concept is capable of engaging and empowering people to a capacity that has been all but lost in

this ‘modern’ world (1997, 121). However, both the literature and my own personal experience with CSA suggest that the movement is utopian in nature as well, something which leads to both practical and conceptual difficulties.

Laura B. DeLind, an anthropologist and part-time farmer who established her own CSA near Lansing, Michigan, writes about the new agricultural world that CSA could bring about:

What we needed, I believed (and still believe), was...to share the “risks and rewards”...of food production. Farmers and eaters not only had to interact, but... needed to involve themselves directly and physically in the growing of their food and in the care of their natural environment. (1999, 3)

Her interpretation of community celebrates shared experiences like harvest festivals, group work days (pulling weeds, composting, etc.), and frequent meetings regarding the direction of the farm (DeLind 1999); in short, the generation of a new community in the most literal sense. But people come into CSAs as members of any number of social networks already, and may not be interested in joining a new one. Indeed, while the literal notion of community may be “a step towards reducing alienation and commodity fetishism, [it] in turn tends to fetishize farming and elevate it over other forms of labor.” (Allen 1999, 125)

Unfortunately for the CSAs that gravitate toward the literal interpretation, “community” has proven to be highly unpopular with CSA members (O’Hara and Stagl 2001, Durrenberger 2002). Survey data from New York State suggest that “socially oriented factors such as...a stronger sense of community rank significantly lower [than concerns about fresh produce and environmental conditions]” (O’Hara and Stagl 2001, 548). CSAs that have obliged members to work on the farm have encountered fierce resistance:

We should have looked upon her money as a resource. We, she [a member] felt, had devalued its importance and treated her as a

second class citizen. She hadn't been able to manage her seasonal work requirement...because she had a two year old daughter, nor was there any reason why she should be made to feel guilty. Her last CSA had made no such demand and this was not what CSAs were about. If WE were having labor problems then WE needed to manage OUR work shares better; HER money would no doubt help. Another member asked bluntly, 'What have you got against hiring a farmer? I have no interest in volunteering on the farm and I am never going to come out and pull weeds. I will support a local farmer, someone who can grow food for me.'...Still others allowed that if fresh produce was available in their neighborhood grocery they wouldn't join a CSA at all. One returned survey simply instructed 'concentrate on vegetables, and stop forcing an artificial community.' (DeLind 1999, 7)

These practical problems are remedied easily enough. But what is troubling from a conceptual standpoint is that the utopian streaks of the American CSA movement call for members to renege on almost 12,000 years of human history. Since the dawn of agriculture, humans have been specializing; one of the perks of settled, agricultural communities is that people can have different jobs, and this presumably has led to uniquely human enterprises like poetry, politics, and sport. Much like their social networks, people already have their jobs: "[one] does not expect to chop vegetables prior to eating a meal at a restaurant and CSA farmers are not expected to help with the shareholders' regular jobs," writes one CSA commentator (Allen 1999, 125). The dream that CSA can return us to, or create outright, a new class of citizens working small, not-for-profit farms seems to represent a historically inaccurate version of American agricultural history where dislocation is nonexistent. Writes Patricia Allen:

The history of US agriculture is one of a distinct and purposeful "disembeddedness" of production and consumption. The development of US agriculture depended on the mass immigration of Europeans to the US, where they evicted and exterminated the indigenous people and became farmers. From the beginning, these farmers produced, for the world market, staple products more cheaply than was possible in Europe...Agrarian communities are agrarian precisely because of global demand for grains...(1999, 120)

Related to this utopian theme is the question of whether the CSA movement is religious or secular. While I've classified the movement as secular given its ultimate goal of ethically- and environmentally-sound food, it's true that there is a sort of non-denominational "connection" to land coupled with a spiritual desire to produce food in an ecologically responsible way that comes up regularly in the CSA literature (Groh 1997, 37). However, survey data shows that most people are not interested in this spiritual side of CSA. In Michigan for example, of the 400 CSA members I surveyed, only 36 (9%) mentioned "spiritual reasons" as important in their decision to join the CSA. This closely parallels the issues surrounding a utopian approach to CSA, in that both religious and utopian ideas are present in the CSA model but are not actually important for the overwhelming majority of members, and so in both of these instances we see further examples of original ideological aspects of the revitalization movement that have been challenged and modified by its adherents.

Finally, we come to the question of whether or not CSA is a nativistic movement. According to Wallace, "a major part of the program of many revitalization movements has been to expel the persons or customs of foreign invaders or overlords." (1956, 278) CSA is certainly a response to the "foreign overlords" of globalization, industrialized food systems, and agribusiness, and so if we interpret the "native" in this instance to mean "local", then CSA is definitely a nativistic movement. Indeed, on all three counts, CSA encourages its members to challenge globalization by eating locally-produced food; respond to industrialized farms and processed foods by consuming organic fresh produce; and counter the influence of large agricultural firms by buying from a small-scale farmer that he or she has met face-to-face.

Using these categories helps us put CSA in context with other revitalization movements. For consistency, let's consider other "green" or food-related movements: the developmental

framework of Wallace's revitalization model lets us compare the history, goals, and membership demography of movements like Slow Food, community gardening, and even the organic food movement in general on equal terms to CSA. This in turn allows us to create organizational hierarchies based on different structural aspects like member involvement, cost, ecological benefit, land use, and so forth. Running these other movements through the revitalization model could be the start of future research and may even be an important source of information for a general public trying to change their culinary or ecological impact on the earth.

With this information in mind, let us return to the final phases of The Period of Revitalization and the ultimate stage of Wallace's revitalization model where I will consider the future of the CSA movement.

5 and 6: Cultural Transformation, Routinization, and The New Steady State (?)

The final phases of the revitalization process mark the time when the movement becomes institutionalized and commonplace. Wallace writes, "[if] the group action program...is effective in reducing stress-generating situations, it becomes established as normal in various economic, social, and political institutions and customs." (Wallace 1956, 275)

It is impossible to say for sure whether or not the CSA movement will reach this ultimate goal. True to its original mission statement, CSA has reintroduced people to where their food comes from, and for many recreated the mental link between the farm and the dinner table. More generally, CSA has raised awareness about the food production system in America, either directly through memberships or indirectly via the myriad newspaper articles, television spots, and blogs on it and other sustainable agriculture topics. Finally, CSA has kept many small- to medium-sized farmers in business, and encouraged others to return to the land or change what they grow. In this sense, the CSA has been a major factor in the preservation of "rural life".

Current trends indicate that CSA will continue to expand, especially as environmental awareness in America continues to grow. The resistance points outlined in this paper will be more completely addressed as large-scale CSAs increase in number, allowing members to select their own produce by both variety and amount. Also, specialty CSAs, like the salad CSA I encountered in Michigan, will become more common: one CSA for vegetables, another for dairy, a third for eggs, and a fourth for meat products, and consumers belonging to all of them under some sort of partnership scheme. It seems reasonable to think that small CSAs producing different foods will partner with each other to offer a more complete range of goods with this goal in mind.

Despite these advances, CSA will probably remain something of a niche market. CSA is a long ways away from forcing the complete cultural transformation that revitalization movements profess to attain, for a number of reasons.

The first consideration must be cost. Despite Van En's claim that "CSA memberships tend to span the socioeconomic strata of a given community, including the elderly, homeless, and the differently-abled," (1997, 118), the reality is that CSA members are overwhelmingly wealthy and well-educated. In Michigan, a state where the median income is around \$45,000 (US Bureau of the Census 2000, 3), the median income for CSA members was \$80,000; similarly, 54.9% of survey respondents had earned a Master's degree or better (16.2% had a PhD), in comparison to the 8.1% of Michiganders overall with advanced degrees (US Bureau of the Census 2000, 2). With this information we see that CSA is the domain of the elite, and while a few operations offer a sliding payment scale or accept food stamps, the majority do not. In this way, "there are many holes in the model as a social movement, one of which is its failure to recognize the diversity of the communities it serves." (McIlvaine-Newsad 2004, 160). For CSA to truly

succeed and realize the goals set forth by Robyn Van En, it will have to find a way to be more inclusive of low-income people.

Yet, lower prices might lead to compromised quality or a gradual erosion of the environmental standards that are currently at the core of CSA. This raises an important question: are “sustainability” and social justice incompatible? It seems implausible that large food retailers who have been able to drive down costs and open up low-income markets by taking advantage of the industrial food system would be able or willing to provide subsidized CSA memberships for poorer people. How, then, can CSA convince people with limited resources to purchase the agricultural futures contract of CSA membership when they know their food dollar could be more safely employed somewhere else?

A second consideration is the question of land - where will all of the new CSAs open? Two of the original concerns driving the CSA movement were the increasing consolidation of landholdings and also the shrinking number of small farmers. How can CSA battle these money-related trends with limited financial resources of its own? More broadly, is there even enough arable land in the U.S. to feed every American using the CSA model?

The final consideration is desire: are there enough people in America who are willing to live with the “downside” of CSA, like going to the farm, not getting everything you need, and maybe paying for food you don’t really like or even want, to live out their ideology of ecological sustainability, helping a small farmer, and eating fresher produce? How will CSA reach out to people who may not see anything wrong with industrial food production?

The answers to all of these questions will be the subject of further research, and the results will be important in determining just how much CSA can continue to grow in America. In the meantime, by tracing the development of American CSA using Anthony Wallace’s 1956

model for revitalization movements, we've seen how CSA functions as a response to the powerlessness felt by many consumers when it comes to food production. In contrast to an industrial food system in which farms provide raw materials for processed foods sold in an international arena where producer and consumer are anonymous to one another, CSA reconnects farmers and "eaters" by establishing a direct relationship between them, and focuses on fresh, organic produce sold exclusively to a local market.

Using the revitalization model allows us to approach something as multi-faceted as the CSA movement in a more holistic way than a purely political, economic, ecological, etc. approach would. Even though it has traditionally been used to study religious or spiritual movements of indigenous origin, Wallace's revitalization model is also applicable to secular movements in the developed West. This framework lets us trace the social and historical development of a movement like CSA and gives insight into the factors that have contributed to its success but also limited its growth. Furthermore, the use of Wallace's model allows us to directly compare the history, goals, and membership demography of CSA with other revitalization movements. In any case, the CSA-as-revitalization idea is an interesting way of illustrating the ways in which people are trying to transform the food supply, natural environment, and economic system around them in order to make the world they live in more satisfying and sustainable.

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Appendix - Survey Results

The following pages present the data from the survey I conducted in the summer of 2007 of Michigan's CSA members.

I will present each question that I asked and then some representation of the responses for each item (bar graph, plot, etc.), along with the total number of responses for that question. The number at the end of each bar relates the number of respondents who indicated that option.

Background: My survey was distributed by CSA farmers to their customers in one of the weekly distribution boxes, and then returned directly to me through the mail. I contacted 61 CSAs, and 29 of them agreed to help me conduct my survey. 1,000 surveys were distributed, and 401 were returned.

The survey itself contained 14 items.

Question 1: "Which CSA do you belong to?" (Write-in response)

Total responses: 401 (Figure 1)

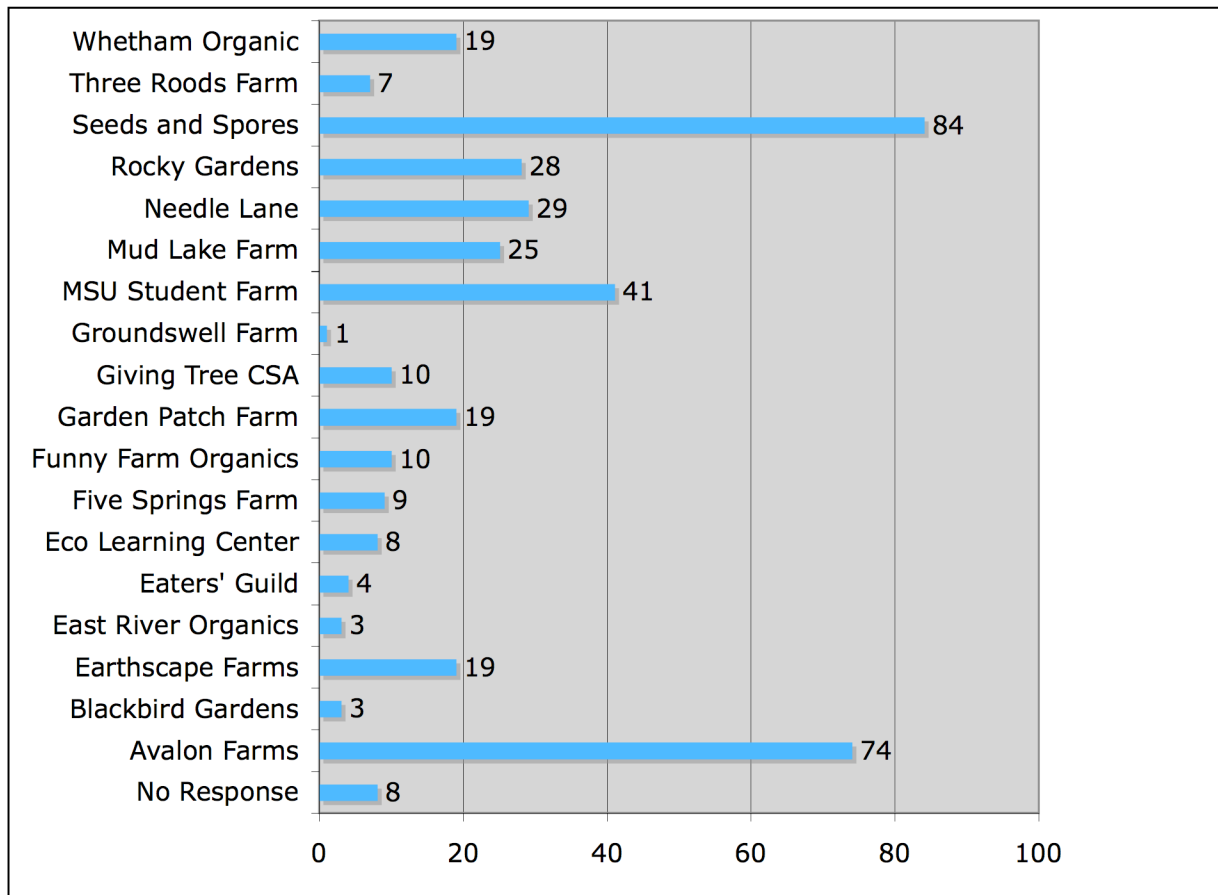


Figure 1

Question 2: How long have you been a member of your CSA?

Total responses: 401 (Figure 2)

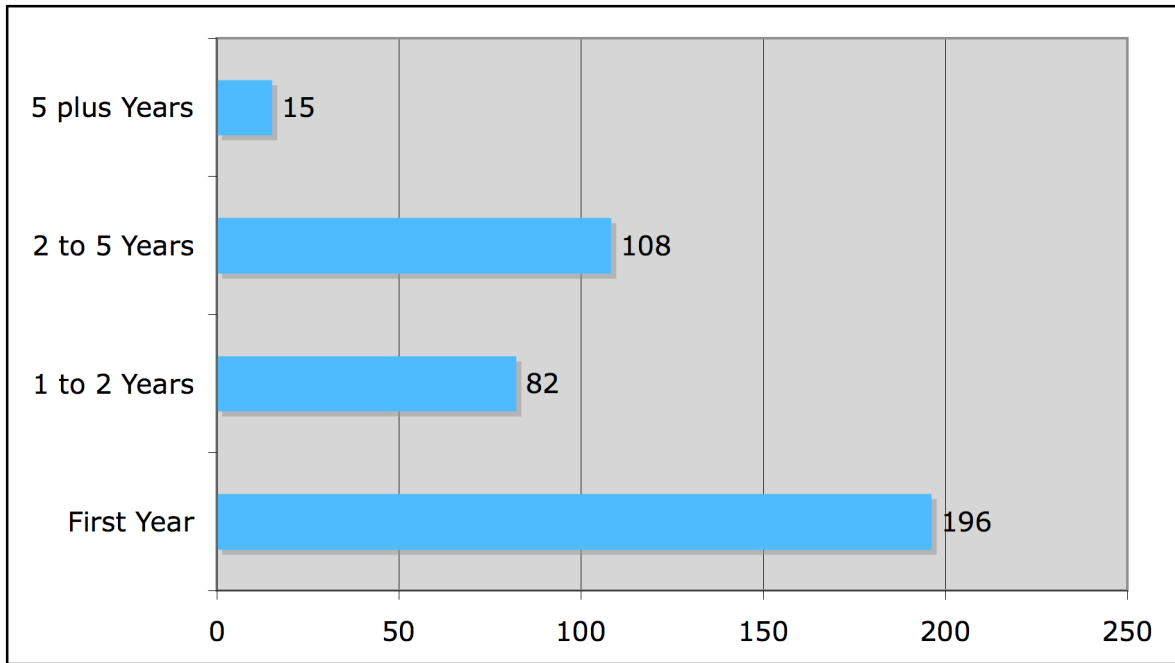


Figure 2

Question 3: “Why did you decide to join the CSA in the first place? (Please check as many as apply)”

Total responses: 401 (Figure 3)

NB: The total number of responses will not add up to 401 because some people selected multiple options.

The options were (in the order that they appeared):

- I wanted healthier food
- I had spiritual reasons for joining
- I don't really trust too much food from the grocery store
- Being part of the CSA is a family tradition
- I think it's better for the environment
- I'm making a social statement
- I wanted to support local farmers and local economies
- I have other reasons

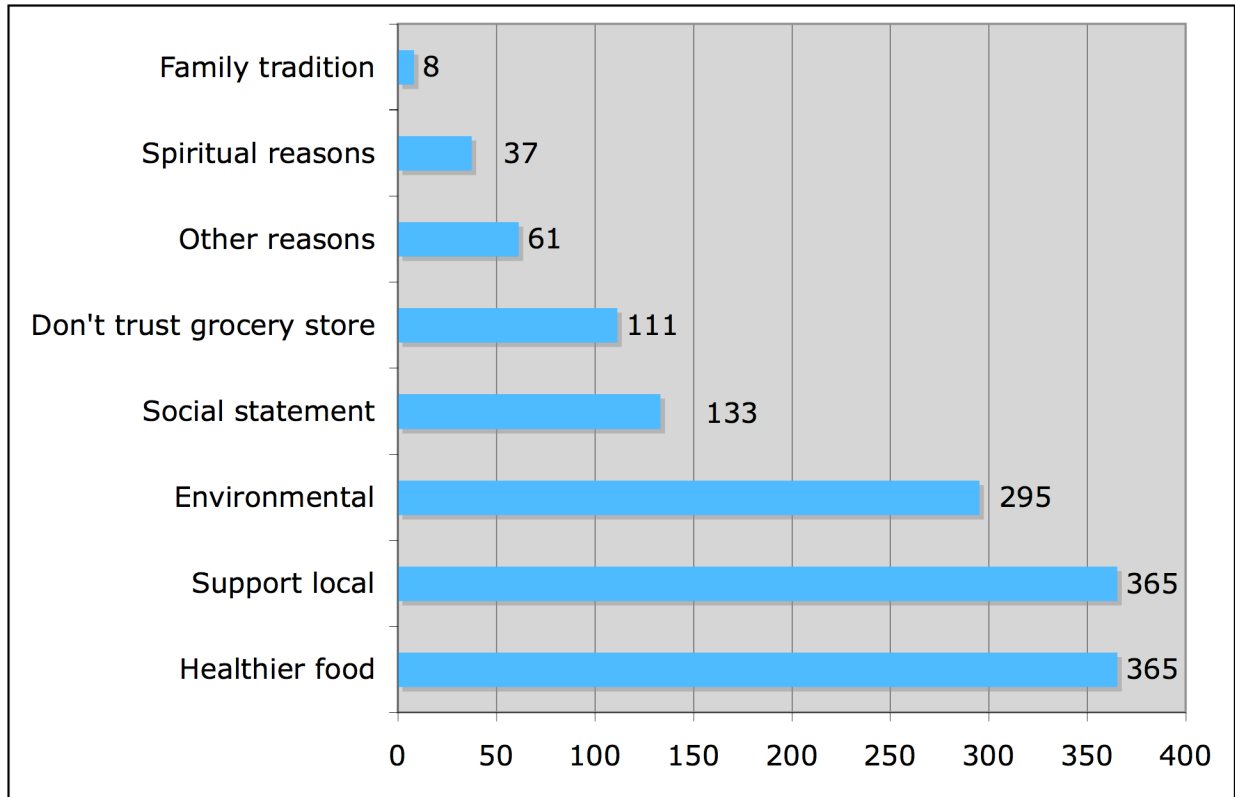


Figure 3

Question 4: “Was there something in particular that caused you to make the switch?” (Write-in)

NB: I transcribed the responses exactly as written on the surveys, including errors in spelling or grammar. All written responses appear below.

- There was a membership open
- Desire local; good food options
- Want to learn about vegetable gardening
- Works at holistic office
- Read the USDA rules for growing organic
- Wanted children to know where food comes from, father was a farmer
- Wanted children to know where food comes from
- My disease has no treatment and no cure so I am trying to live a healthier lifestyle
- Wanted healthier food and lifestyle
- Husband diagnosed with illness
- Health reasons and environmental impact of current food system
- Can't grow my own vegetables in my yard
- Provide healthiest food for family
- Political statement
- Finally lived near enough to one I liked

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- My daughter
- Reading about healthier eating, sister's illness
- Wanted to eat more locally grown food
- Something new for our family
- Wanted fresh local foods, better allergy protection for kids
- Heard about from friend
- Friends
- Kevin Trudeau
- Friends
- The opportunity to support local farms during tough economic times in Michigan
- Friends
- Child with severe allergies
- Neighbor is member
- Saw tv program on CSAs
- Food distribution, fuel usage, environment, and economic
- Family member involved in conservation
- GMO not kosher, troubled by pesticide use
- Wanted to buy fresh, locally grown, organic produce
- Read an article on csas and wanted to be part of one
- Wanted better tasting food
- Friends
- Children and grandchildren with illness
- Sounded economically competitive with the grocery store, bonus of home delivery
- I love fresh food and am unable to have my own garden
- I am concerned with link between food and health, the environment; read books by Goodall, Carson, and Kingsolver to find csas
- Wanted food grown without pesticides
- Neighbor is member
- Wanted local food first
- It is very convenient as someone from child's tae kwon do delivers the food
- Friends
- Fewer pesticides
- Diagnosis with non-Hodgkins lymphoma
- Went out to eat too often, processed foods make me tired
- Diagnosed with MS and desire for unpolluted food
- Just wanted to eat healthier
- Threatened by more genetically modified food
- Organic foods are very expensive in stores
- Friend bought us first share
- I read the Omnivore's Dilemma
- Want healthy and safe food for daughter
- Relative suggested a CSA
- Wanted cleaner food and to support local farmers
- We're running a retreat center and wanted to offer as much organic food as possible
- Read an article on csas and wanted to be part of one
- Wanted local organic produce

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- Friends
- Wanted healthier food and environment
- Was looking for a source of organic produce
- Close to home and I was accepted
- Convenient, don't have to help sort or break down order
- Availability with people I trust
- To reduce dependence on foreign oil, I'm trying to eat closer to home
- Putting our words into action
- Health reasons
- Better price than organic grocery store, heard it was available at the Flint farmer's market
- Wanted to continue family tradition of organic gardening but didn't have the yard space, wanted kids to know where their food comes from, read an article
- Curiosity
- Friends
- Daughters and self have celiac
- Liked concept of being part of a farm without actually being a farm
- Although I use a food co-op, I like to use farm direct products, left the city all food from farms
- Didn't think family was as healthy as they could be, haven't got sick in 2 years
- Didn't want chemicals on my veggies
- My children worked at a CSA in Ann Arbor and I learned about them
- Forces us to eat alternative veggies
- Grocery store produce was too expensive and poor quality, coop also too expensive
- Moved here and learned of availability
- Friends
- Our church was doing a study about being better stewards of the earth and we learned about the CSA
- Wanted healthy, fresh organic veggies
- I don't trust the food at the grocery store
- Address health concerns and carbon footprint, wanted food that hadn't traveled a long distance
- I thought it would be fun to try
- Had no time this year to attend to our own greenhouse, share with a parent who likes to try different food each week, therapeutic and fun
- My husband was a leader in the field of agricultural economics and died of leukemia
- Thought it would be fun and different
- My health
- A friend was diagnosed with cancer and switched to all organic foods - cancer gone
- Healthier food, tastes better
- Wanted a combination of locally grown produce and a healthier lifestyle, started shopping at a local coop and then added a CSA
- Space was available
- Was diagnosed with cancer and wanted to rid my body of toxins, pesticides, and processed foods
- First possibility to join, local foods are critical because US govt subsidies focus on corn, soy, and pesticides

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- Desire to eat locally grown organic produce and support sustainable farming practices
- Poor quality of conventional produce, overuse of high fructose corn syrup
- Vegetarian, became available
- Concerned about pesticides
- Wanted to be organic, no pesticides are healthier for family and society
- Easy, convenient, healthy
- Wanted local foods with organic farming practices
- Desired fresher food while helping local farmers
- Friends
- Availability
- Organically grown
- Wanted healthier food with greater variety
- Friends and I thought it would be fun
- The more I learned about conventional foods the more I realized how dangerous they are
- We moved and this farm was nearby
- I found out they existed
- Better and fresher food
- Don't want imported food
- Convenient, they deliver
- Its fun, and a friend had an application available
- Lovely vegetables
- Wanted to avoid chemicals on food, believe they are associated with cancer and other diseases
- Wanted higher quality produce
- Wanted healthy food
- Faith in God's creation that renewal will happen, wanted to support local farmers, wanted to grow own garden but couldn't, wanted to control my grocery shopping more effectively and affectively
- Really believe in local food and supporting farmers
- A friend works there and delivers to us
- I have wanted to participate in a CSA for some time
- Attended the organizing meeting held at the flint farmer's market
- Opportunity and knowledge that CSAs were available
- Went to a CSA informational meeting
- Vegetables from farm and delivered have better flavor
- I just moved back from North Carolina
- Was invited to join by farmer and friends
- I had gardened organically for 40 years, but my trees got too tall and I couldn't get enough sunlight
- Bad produce at grocery store
- I found someone who wanted to split a share - a whole share would be too much for one person
- Children's health top priority
- Availability
- All the chemicals in food and compromised nutrients

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- We wanted to eat food that was picked when it was ripe and not transported miles and miles
- Cheap fresh organic veggies
- Cost, great family farm, good environmental practices (MAEAP certified)
- Can't buy here in stores and organic, quality produce tastes better
- No time for grocery shopping
- Quality, important to eat locally grown food
- I thought it would be great for my children to learn about farming and gardening and to understand where food comes from
- Just trying to become more focused on buying locally
- It is not a switch, it is another way to get food
- Availability
- Just a commitment to eating local and organic
- Support local agriculture from land development
- I didn't know about it until Patrice delivered my baby
- I am grateful for them and their work
- Therapy o get out and garden with friends, fun
- No, we have been eating about 90 to 100% organic for a number of years and have always used farmers' markets and now CSAs when seasonally possible
- In northern Michigan, I am aware of CSA members who mainly join out of fear, as our food supply is not to be trusted
- Search for good, fresh, no chemical food
- I know my farmers
- Because this was our first opportunity and Bev Ruselink is very dynamic in selling her produce
- We learned about it at the farmer's market and signed up
- I like the variety and the fresh produce
- Worked as an intern on a CSA last summer and became addicted to vegetables
- Food-borne illness from lettuce and spinach
- Wanted local lettuce in the winter
- Awareness
- Once I found out CSA existed I wanted in, I learned about it 18 months ago
- Meeting the farmers
- Delicious greens in the winter
- This CSA had just started, and was advertising pickup at a store where I shop, this arrangement made my decision easier; also, they offer small/single shares
- I had belonged to a CSA 10 years ago in another state and really enjoyed it, like getting variety of veggies, we've discovered that we enjoy things we never would have thought
- I wanted more organic produce and food that hasn't travelled halfway around the world
- I thought the food would taste better than from grocery store, and I joined as soon as I learned about CSAs
- Heard about the CSA from a friend
- I had not heard of CSAs until reading about them in local papers and Time Magazine this year
- This was a gradual process away from our own garden to local produce and foods
- Healthier food and support locals

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- Difficult to find organic fruits and veggies locally, a one hour drive to meijers in bay city
- Foreign food imports
- This CSA delivers to a store in the town where I work, so it was convenient, also it was fun to join in the first year and feel like a supporter of local organic farming at a personal level
- No, I still grow some of my own too
- Fresher produce
- It was close to my home
- Friends
- Reading books by Wendell Berry as well as Fast Food Nation
- I strongly believe I am helping support local business, the flavor and texture are much better
- Convenience
- Education
- Gift from family
- My daughter
- My cousin has started a farm in Oregon
- Found out about Mud Lake farm, and it was located close to us
- No, I was a Funny Farm customer for many years before learning about their CSA
- Wanted to feed my two year old healthy organic produce
- We wanted to eat healthier and without chemicals
- I have a chronic health condition and wanted to avoid chemically treated food, quality and freshness of the food
- Wanted to support student education, was accessible
- Vegetarian, friends and co-workers were doing it and a space became available
- Local availability
- Wanted to support the student farm, try something new
- No, it's a natural evolution out of my quest to eat healthier, which began 9 years ago
- Lack of local farms, concerns about the environmental
- It became easily available and really local
- It became easily available and really local
- Lifelong support of local farmers
- I was searching for organic foods to have them delivered rather than spend time and gas to drive 25 min to Whole Foods; I enjoy gardening and the farm sounded wonderful
- Our health, environment, less expensive, knowing my farmer and supporting local, decreasing fossil fuel use
- I am raising meat goats and have become more aware of local sustainable ag challenges, I felt I'm supporting local ag this way
- Yes, we moved here from california and knew this would be the best way to continue our fresh veggie habit
- Support of the SOF education, research, and outreach roles
- Rising interest in local food and increasing my backing of sustainable living
- Support training of new farmers, I helped to develop the farm
- Wanted fresh food; this csa was available and convenient
- Knowing about it
- I read an article about CSAs

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- I was invited to work with the CSA before it was founded because of my involvement with the student greenhouse project
- Not home enough during summer, garden requires attention, food tastes better, referral from friends
- Fresh beautiful
- This is a 12 month CSA; our previous CSA was only 4-5 months
- Better food and community for our one year old daughter
- Learning about the Fair Trade movement and Catholic Social Justice teachings
- A friend wanted to share a membership
- Breast cancer and the need for organic vegetables, my family of four is vegetarian
- Desire to know not only where my food comes from, but to eat organic, nutrient rich food
- When we became pregnant, we began seeking a healthier lifestyle
- Concern of environment and believe in decreasing pesticide and insecticide chemical use
- Someone was able to coordinate it for us
- My health
- Timing, there were openings
- Health issues was first, then environment / spiritual
- Environmentalism, seeing the farm!
- Being stable enough to commit for a season
- Lettuce and spinach scare
- Yes, the death of my father who provided us with organic garden veggies prior
- CSAs were promoted this year by the Flint Farmer's Market, in Flint
- Understanding the cost to our planet to ship food from one side of the country to the other
- Change from eating processed to whole foods
- We learned about this from our daughter's membership
- Wanting cleaner, safer, more nutritious food
- Invited by a friend
- Friends offered to share their share
- Local farmers
- Pregnancy with my son caused me to re-evaluate my lifestyle
- Opportunity and support of local farms
- Availability
- The state's economy is in trouble and I am committed to supporting it by buying locally
- Friend's advice, health
- Local food and organic
- Proximity and convenience
- No, I had it in mind since I first heard of CSAs
- Just becoming aware of CSAs
- Reading about the Farm Bill
- I read a book called the Omnivore's Dilemma
- Health concerns, cancer diagnosis
- Wanting organic, local produce
- I love the idea of knowing where our family's food is coming from
- Part of lifestyle changes, awareness of local food movement, to consume with lower environmental impact
- We're vegan and have been for 12 years

Howell - CSA as Revitalization

- Flavor-less grocery store vegetables - I want my children to know what a real veggie tastes like
- Saw a newspaper article on GP farms
- Just moving to MI and realizing I had great organic local food available
- Just realizing that the mainstream food I was eating is complete crap and harming my health

Question 5: “Do any of your friends also belong to the CSA?”

Total responses: 399 (Figure 4)

- Yes, the same one as me
- Yes, but a different CSA
- No, they don't

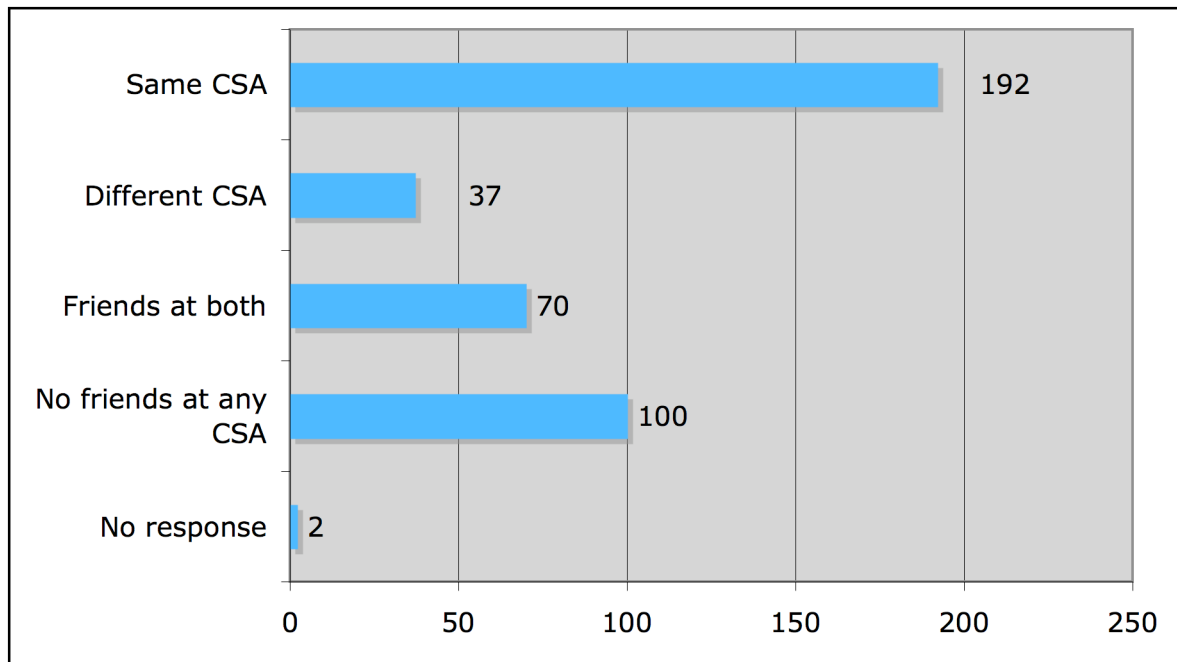


Figure 4

Question 6: “Do any family members (outside your household) belong to CSA?”

Total responses: 400 (Figure 5)”

- Yes, the same one as me
- Yes, but a different CSA
- No, they don't

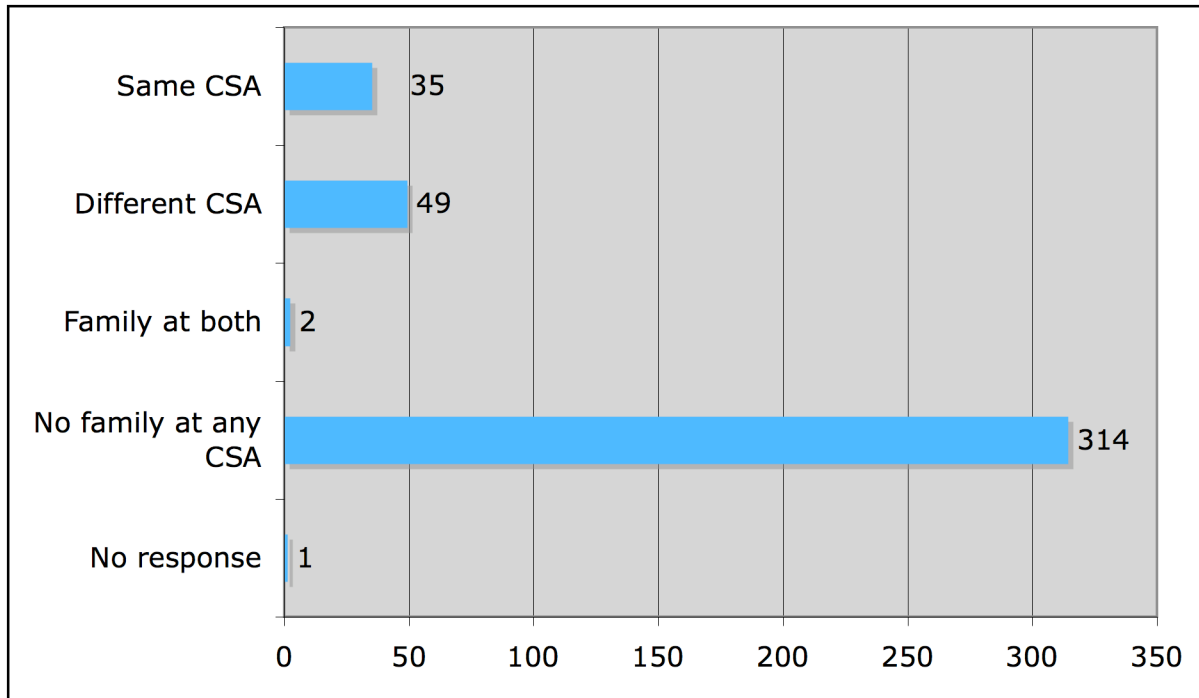


Figure 5

Question 7: “How do you the prices for food at your CSA compare with prices for the same food at your usual grocery store? Prices at my CSA are...”

Total responses: 389 (Figure 6)

- A lot higher
- Somewhat higher
- They're about the same
- Somewhat less expensive
- A lot less expensive
- I don't really shop at the grocery store

NB: A few people added their own option by writing in something like “I don't know” or “I don't care,” and they have been put in the “No Response” category

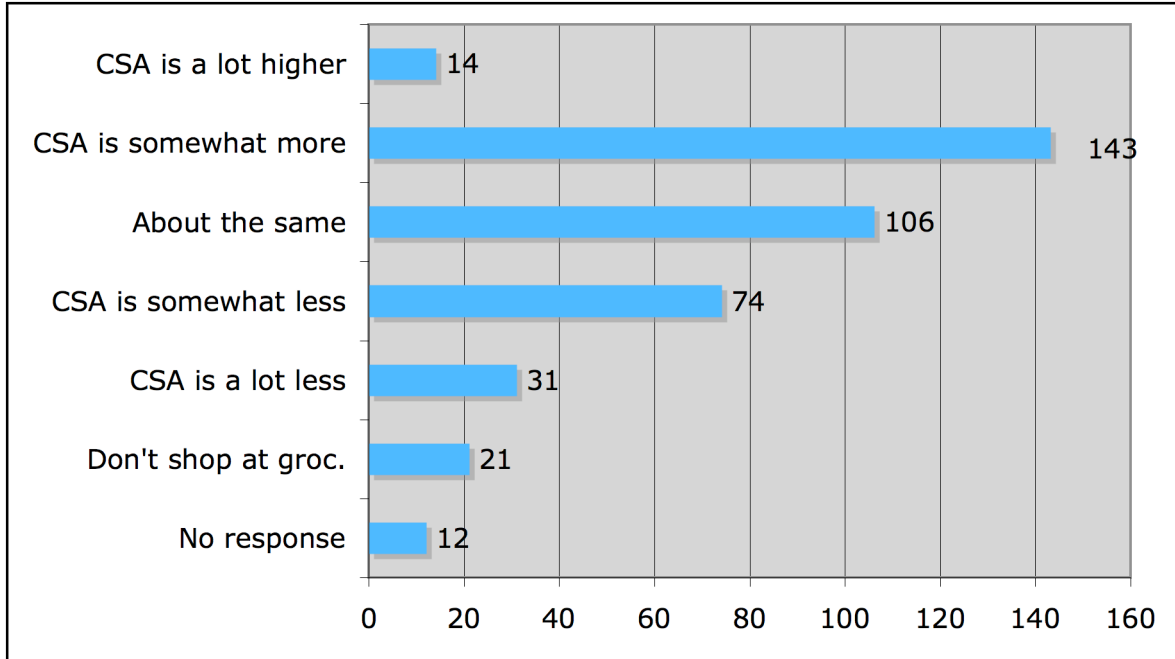


Figure 6

Question 8: “Do you feel like you are getting good value for your money by purchasing food from the CSA?”

Total responses: 401 (Figure 7)

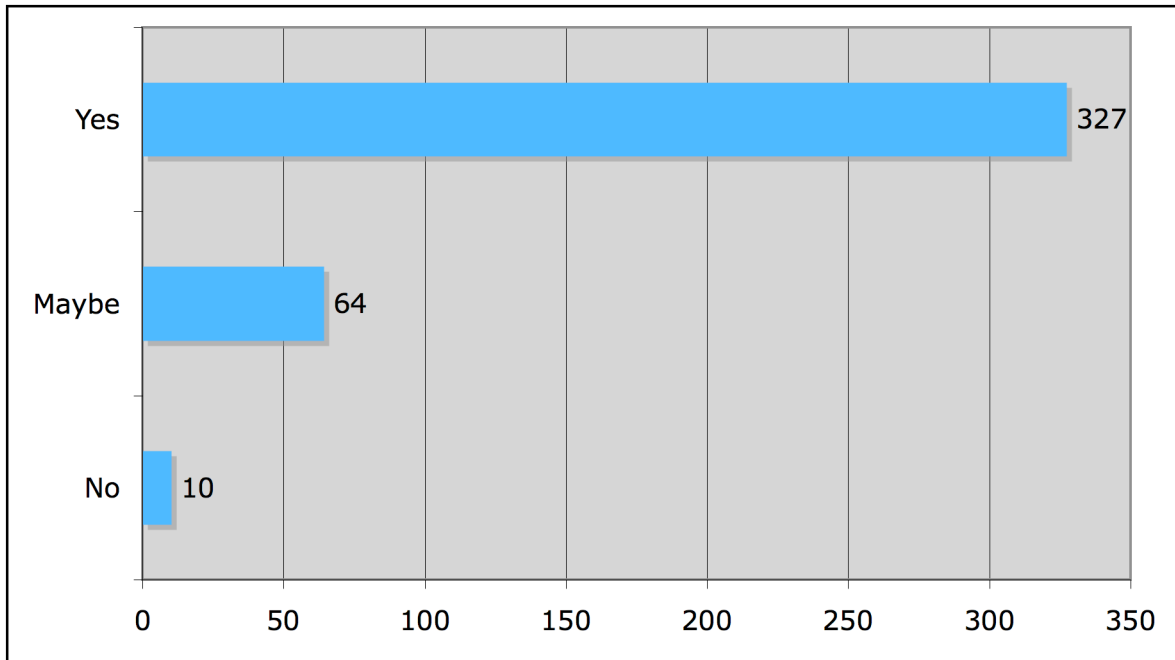


Figure 7

Question 9: "What county do you live in?" (Write-in)

Total responses: 394 (Figure 8)

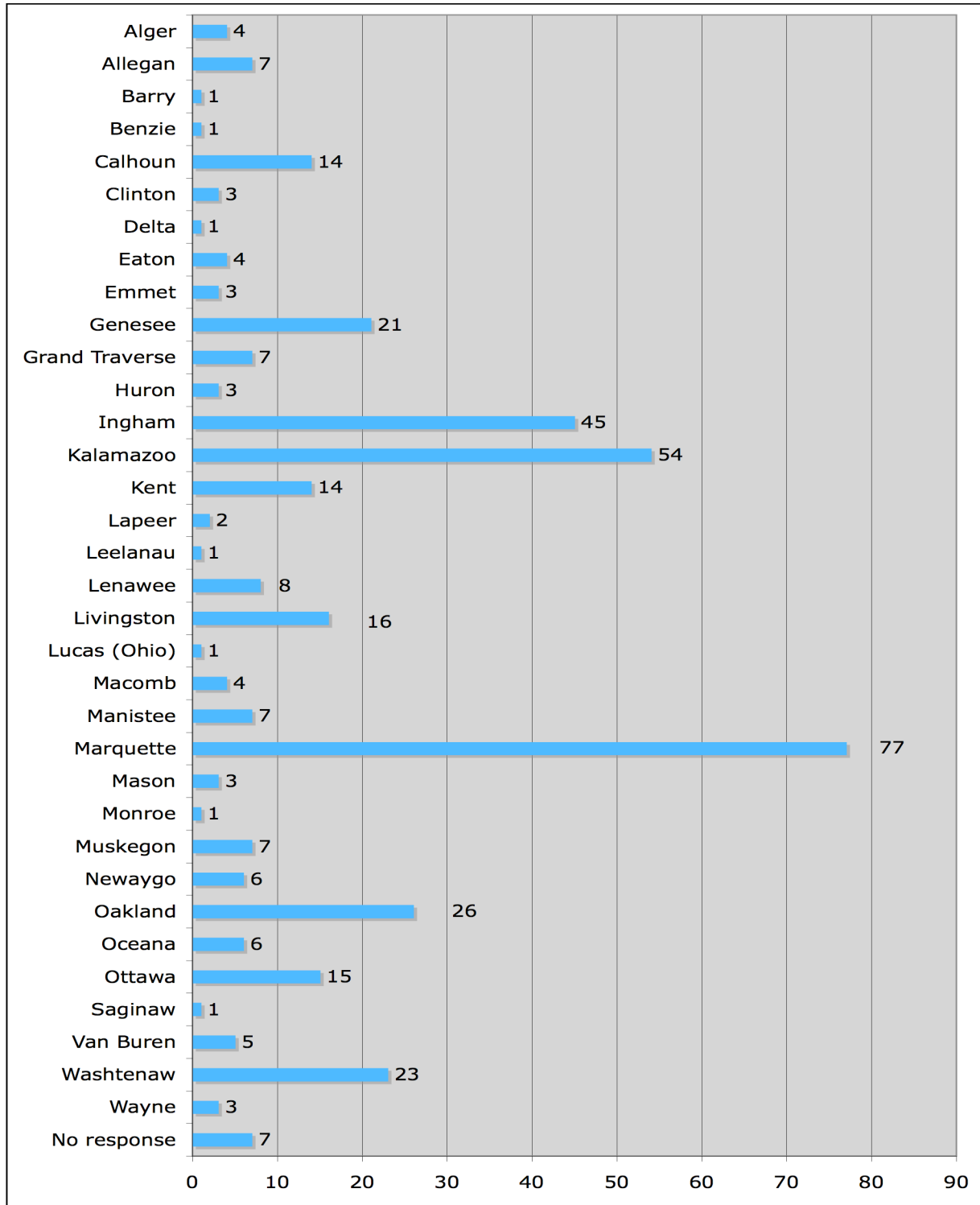


Figure 8

Question 10: “How far do you live from the CSA you belong to?”

Total responses: 386 (Figure 9)

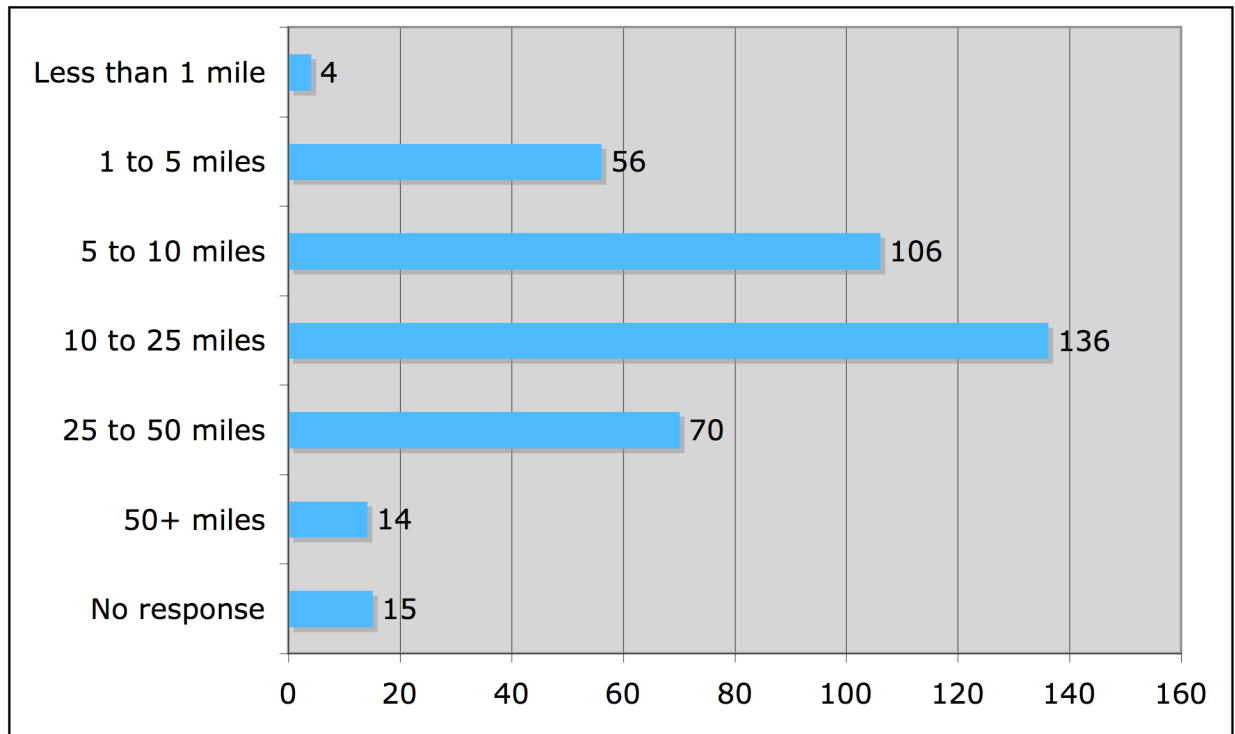


Figure 9

Question 11: “What is your household income?”

Total responses: 361 (Figure 10)

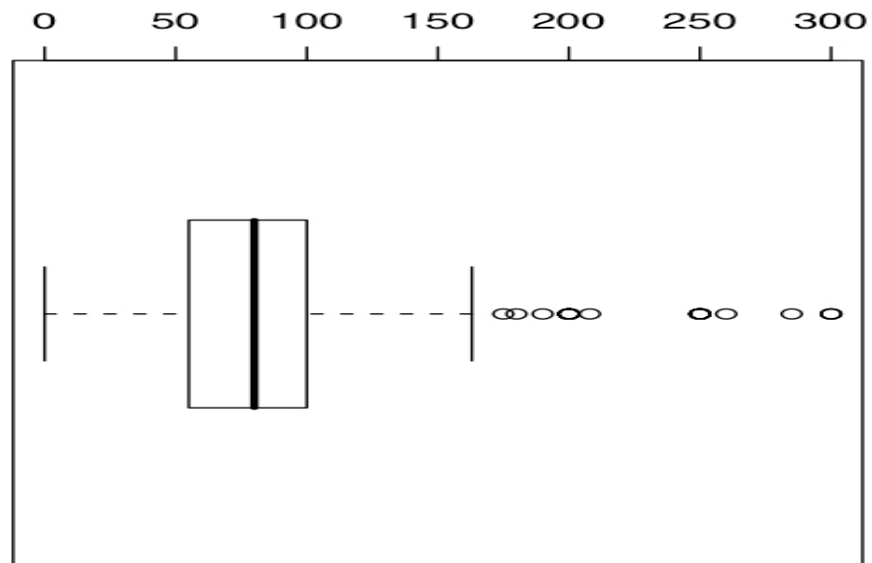


Figure 10

The median income for survey responders was \$80,000

The mean income for survey responders was \$89,600

The lowest income reported was \$0, and the highest was \$300,000

Question 12: “What level of education have you completed?”

Total responses: 399 (Figure 11)

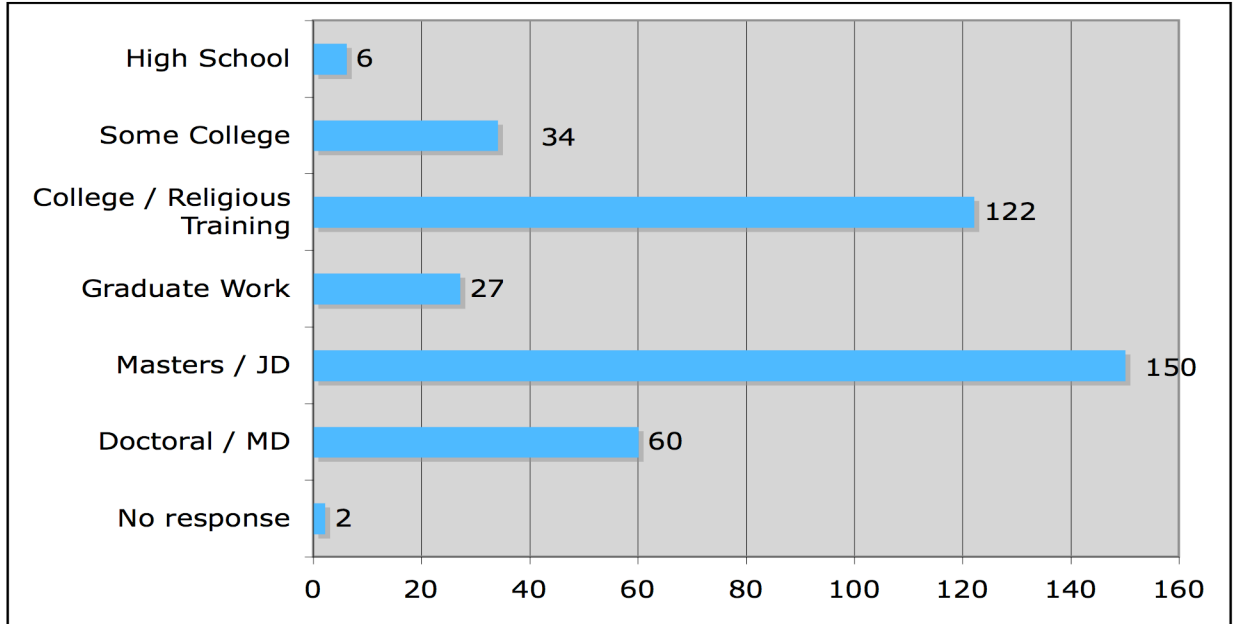


Figure 11

Question 13: “Do you help the farmer at your CSA produce the food? For instance, do you help him or her harvest various crops?”

Total responses: 400 (Figure 12)

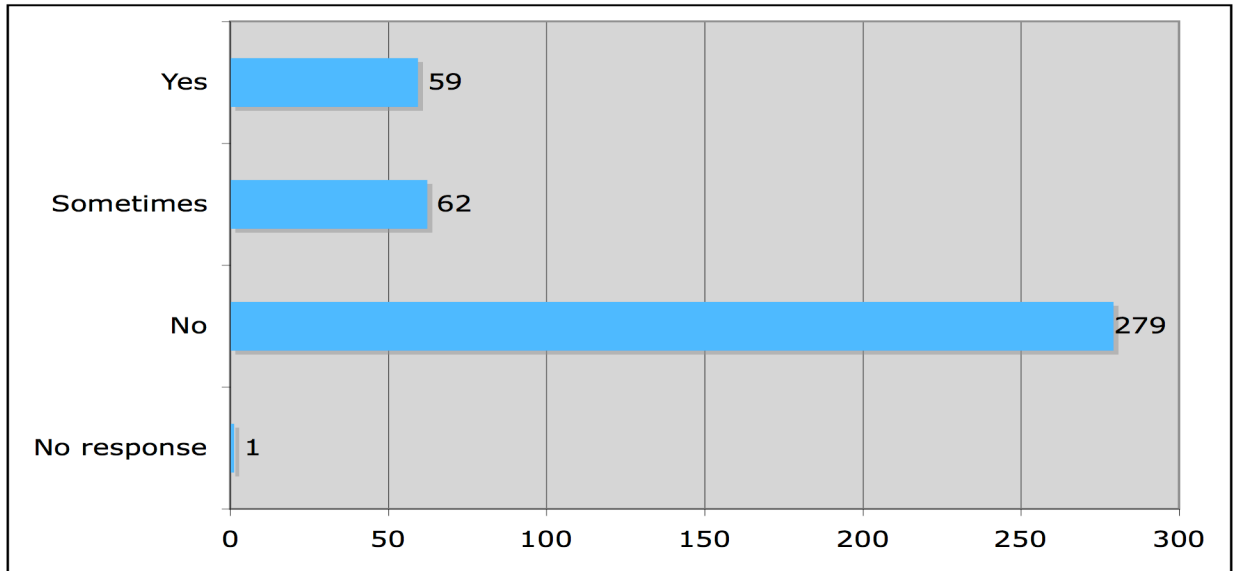


Figure 12

Question 14: “Do you think you will stay with your current CSA in the future?”

Total responses: 401 (Figure 13)

- Yes
- I like the idea of CSA, but may switch to a different one (Maybe)
- No

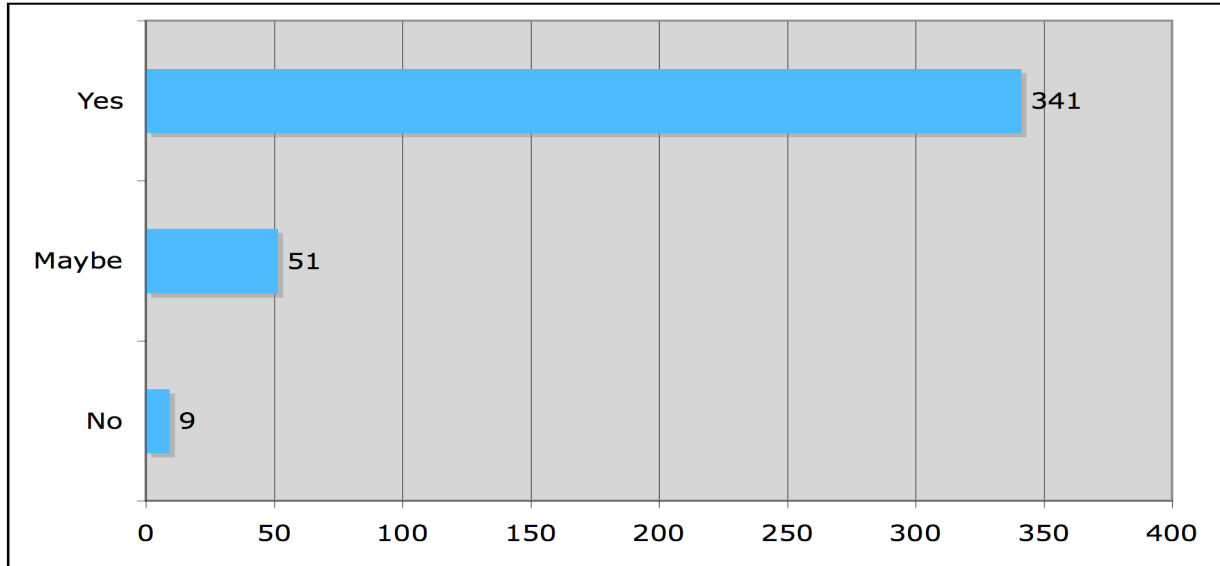


Figure 13