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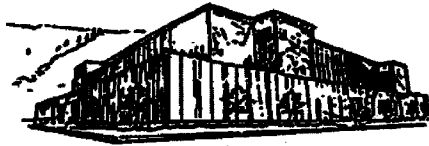
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BUILDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, BUILDING BUSINESS:

A CASE STUDY

OF VENDORS AT THE MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET

By

Kathryn E. Bradford

B.A. University of Montana. 2000

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

May 2003

Approved by:



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Building Social Relationships, Building Business: A Case Study of Vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market

Chair: Jill Belsky *JB*

Most studies of the growing phenomenon of farmers' markets focus on consumers. However, to understand if and how farmers' markets providing a different type of place for social interaction around food, we need to know more about vendors' experiences in the farmers' market. This thesis takes the Missoula Farmers' Market in western Montana as its case study and identifies different types of vendors and documents the different orientation of these vendors toward selling fresh produce at the market. It also attempts to examine some of the implications of these orientations for activities both within and beyond the actual farmers' market itself.

The research methods were largely interpretive. The researcher attended and observed vendors at the market for two market seasons, and conducted in-depth interviews with thirteen vendors who varied by ethnicity and length of time selling at the market. The researcher found that some vendors are largely involved for social or non-economic reasons, while others are more focused on selling as an economic or profit-making activity. Vendors displayed a range of levels of satisfaction regarding the overall administration of the farmers' market. The research did not find important connections between vendors and activities beyond the farmers' market, such as social organizing. The Missoula Farmers' Market challenges the global food system by providing a local alternative with space for both social and economic orientations. This thesis concludes with questions and challenges facing the Missoula Farmers' Market in the future.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
A Globalized Food System	
Alternatives to the Global System: Local Food Systems	
Farmers' Markets	
3. RESEARCH METHODS.....	13
Data Collection	
The Data	
Issues Encountered	
Limitations and Strengths of Methods	
4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET.....	22
Market Co-founder's Historical Narrative	
Current Operating Procedures	
5. FINDINGS.....	27
Why Vendors Started and Continue Selling at the Missoula Farmers' Market	
Social Relationships among Vendors	
Changes Identified by Vendors within a Growing Market	
Perceptions of Hmong Vendors by other Vendors at the Market	
Administration of the Farmers' Market	

Summary of Findings

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION..... 55

The Difference between Vendors' Social and Economic Orientation
to the Farmers' Market

Ethnic Tensions among Vendors

Market Rules and Regulations

Building Social Relationships among Vendors

Future Questions

Appendix

1. MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET RULES AND
REGULATIONS- 2002..... 74

2. GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS..... 77

WORKS CITED..... 78

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As the global economic system increasingly absorbs processes of food production and food systems, scholars as well as community leaders are drawing attention back to the local level of food production. Local food systems may be an alternative to large-scale global food systems (O'Hara and Stagl 2001). They have been described as a system in which food is produced, sold, and consumed within a particular community or region. A local food system is "rooted in particular place(s), aims to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, uses ecologically sound production and distribution practices, and enhances social equity and democracy for all members of the community" (Feenstra 1997, 28).

Farmers' markets are considered a viable part of a local food system. Farmers' markets have become revitalized in the U.S. over the past few decades as a local alternative to the growing globalized food system. Throughout the United States, the number of farmers' markets has increased by 79 percent from 1994 to 2002. According to the 2002 National Farmers' Market Directory, there are over 3,100 farmers' markets operating in the United States (USDA 2003). Farmers' markets not only provide an alternative to a global food system, but they can also provide the context of recurring social interactions that build social capital (i.e. social networks and trust) (Lyson and Green 1999).

Recently scholars have placed attention on the importance of direct agricultural markets in local communities for raising confidence in consumers as well as promoting

social networking. Trust and social connection are important between producers and consumers, but also important among producers themselves. Trust and social connection among vendors would likely ensure viability for farmers' markets as an alternative market.

Many studies on farmers' markets have focused mostly on consumers. But some also point out that it is important to examine the interactions between vendors at the farmers' market: why they participate and how they contribute among themselves to the social interaction that characterizes local food systems. Social, non-economic relationships and community bonds are also important at farmers' markets and may co-exist with economic relationships (Kloppenborg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996; Hinrichs 2000).

This thesis examines motivations of vendors to participate in the Missoula farmers' market as a case study. I chose this focus because in order to know if farmers' markets are providing alternatives to global food systems, and in part providing a place for social interaction around food, we need to understand more about the vendors' experiences in the farmers' market. This thesis investigates the reasons why farmers participate in the Missoula farmers' market, identifies different types of farmers, and why these different types of farmers are involved. Furthermore, I pay close attention to how these farmers/vendors interpret their own experience at the farmers' market, and especially the degree to which economic and/or non-economic factors play a key role in their market experience. Lastly, I examine the social relationships among different types of vendors at the Missoula farmers' market to identify how differences among vendors affect these relationships.

I discuss three major findings among vendors I interviewed at the farmers' market. The first major finding refers to the motivations for vendors to participate and vendors' orientation to the market. I discuss the range of reasons why vendors participate. This range includes social reasons, enjoying growing for the market as a hobby, exercise, and economic reasons. I identify a difference between economic and social orientations of vendors to the market and discuss how this difference affects social relationships among vendors. The second major finding encompasses the types of social relationships among vendors. I have found that although most vendors I interviewed value the social aspect of the market, social relationships often do not extend beyond ethnic groups and are also further limited by the length of time vendors have been selling time at the market and farming techniques. The third major finding is the concerns of vendors regarding the organization and operation of the administration of the Missoula farmers' market. Many vendors I interviewed expressed concerns with how the market is run, specifically how the rules are enforced and how the process of change is managed.

The outline of the thesis is as follows: In chapter two I provide a review of the literature discussing the scholarly importance of local food systems, specifically farmers' markets, in providing a supplemental alternative to the global food system and maintaining community social connections. Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of my research methods. I discuss how I selected a sample of vendors, conducted interviews, and analyzed the data. I also discuss some of the issues I encountered while conducting the research and identify some strengths and limitations of the methods. Chapter four gives historical background of the Missoula farmers' market through the narrative of one of the market's co-founders. I also provide a description of

the current operating procedures and rules of the farmers' market. Chapter five presents the findings of my research as a report of what the vendors told me about their experiences at the Missoula farmers' market. Although organized by common themes, the findings present many unique experiences, opinions and concerns as identified by the vendors I interviewed. Chapter six provides an analysis of my findings and I discuss the implications of my findings for the Missoula farmers' market in the future. The discussion includes the difference between economic and social orientations of vendors to the market, ethnic relations, market rules and regulations, and limitations to building social relationships among vendors.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE

A Globalized Food System

As many scholars have noted food production and food consumption world wide have become dominated by a global food system. Connections to a mass-marketed global food system are particularly apparent in the American economy. Lyson and Green (1999) note that the global food system has become dominant because it provides abundant quantities of relatively inexpensive, standardized goods. As American society modernizes, these inexpensive standardized goods provide convenience in terms of the efficiency, predictability, and quantity as required for life in today's modern rationalized society (Ritzer 2001). The rationality of a global food system, however, is relative. It may be rational (i.e., profitable) for transnational agricultural corporations and convenient for modern consumers, but there are many questions concerning the rationale for human and community well being.

The role of agribusiness in the global economic sphere is similar to many global capitalist corporations. Agribusinesses are located where there are few government regulations and where there is an abundance of cheap labor. Agribusiness "tend(s) to gravitate to areas where government intervention is minimal and wages are low or in which costs can be reduced through mechanization and increases in scale" (Kloppenborg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996, 35). Thus, where government intervention is minimal, particularly in this era of trade liberalization, corporations find limited

environmental and labor regulations. Increases in scale of operation often include the production of high yield mono-crops, which require the use of pesticides and jeopardize the health of individuals and the land around them.

Our food comes increasingly from all points on the globe. Food found in supermarkets in the United States “travels an average of 1,300 miles” (Lacy 2000, 19) and is handled 33 times (Kahn and McAlister 1997 as cited in Guptill and Wilkins 2002, 39). Lacy (2000) identifies two important characteristics of the global food system: (1) intense commodification and (2) an accelerating distancing of producer and consumer from each other and from the earth. Although there is a growing distance between producers and consumers of food, this distance may be considered by capitalists as a global connection in that food produced in one hemisphere may be transported and sold to another:

In any supermarket here in Madison, Wisconsin, we can find tomatoes from Mexico, grapes from Chile, lettuce from California, apples from New Zealand... blackberries from Guatemala... The food eaten by North Americans today often comes from a global everywhere, yet from nowhere that they know in particular. The distance from which their food comes represents their separation from the knowledge of how and by whom what they consume is produced, processed, and transported (Kloppenborg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996, 33-34).

A defining characteristic of the modernized food system is the elimination of any direct connection between the producer and the consumer. Consumers have become unfamiliar with who produces their food, and where and how their food is produced. Consumers are able to go to the grocery store and purchase food without thinking about where it came from, who produced it, or how it was produced. In Marxian terms, there may be a sense of alienation on the part of the consumer who does not see where the

product came from and a sense of alienation on the part of the farmer who does not know what happens to his or her product. As a consequence of the global food system people are separated from the knowledge of how, where and by whom their food is produced, and from how their food is processed and transported. These processes often tend to destroy land, water, air, and human communities and consumers are unaware of the implications of their involvement in the global food system (Lacy 2000). Not only are people often unaware of the implications of their involvement in the global food system, but also they are often unaware of the resulting “disempowerment because it homogenizes our food, our landscapes, and our communities” (Lacy 2000, 20).

Alternatives to the Global System: Local Food Systems

As the global economic system increasingly absorbs processes of food production and food systems, scholars as well as community leaders are drawing attention back to the local level of food production. Local food systems may be an alternative to large-scale global food systems (O’Hara and Stagl 2001). They have been described as a system in which food is produced, sold, and consumed within a particular region. A local food system is “rooted in particular place(s), aims to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, uses ecologically sound production and distribution practices, and enhances social equity and democracy for all members of the community” (Feenstra 1997, 28). As the global economic system grows, people become not only distanced from their food, but also distanced from each other and their community. Greater distance between people and their community may result in a decrease of social capital.

Putnam (1993, 1996) notes the decline in social capital and civic engagement in recent decades. Social capital refers to “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993, 1). Local food systems may be considered a way to rebuild social capital and promote civic engagement. Within a local food system people often trust that food is organic (if identified as so) and fresh, they also know who produced it and who is consuming the food. Direct agricultural markets, an example of a local food system, provide human connection at the place production and consumption of food come together (Hinrichs 2000).

Recently scholars have placed attention on the importance of direct agricultural markets in local communities in placing confidence in consumers as well as promoting social networking. “Trust and social connection characterize direct agricultural markets, distinguishing local food systems from the global food system” (Hinrichs 2000, 295). Local food systems have been identified as an alternative way to democratize and empower communities (Lacy 2000). Local food systems have also been identified as a way to strengthen community identity (Lyson 2001) by aiming to enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community (Feenstra 1997) and serving as a powerful catalyst for developing social capital (Lyson and Green 1999).

In the effort to bring the food system back to the local level, scholars, practitioners, and some community members have placed an emphasis on the importance of buying locally as well as organically. Buying locally often includes buying from the producer at some type of direct agricultural market. Buying locally at direct agricultural

markets promotes community and encourages the creation of social networks through face-to-face interaction between customers and farmers.

Proponents of a local food system bring to light some characteristics of locally grown food as well as some of the benefits for consumers:

Locally grown food is fresher, and so tastier and more nutritious, than food transported over long distances. It is also likely to be healthier, because the producer knows the consumers, and doesn't view them merely as a faceless 'target market', and so is less likely to take risks and liberties with preservatives and other artificial chemicals. Increasingly, faced with a bland, globalized food culture, people are realizing the advantages of local food, and are working to rejuvenate markets for it. (Norberg-Hodge 1999, 210).

Thus, food sold within a local food system is said to be healthier for the consumer because the producer and the consumer have face-to-face communication at the place of market. It may be a viable alternative to the globalized food system where there is no connection between consumer and producer.

Arthur Getz's term "foodshed" has been used to facilitate thought about where our food is coming from and how it is getting to us (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996). The term is adapted from the geographical concept of a watershed and it encompasses "the physical, biological, social, and intellectual components of the multidimensional space in which we live and eat" (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996, 41). The term "foodshed" becomes a "unifying and organizing metaphor for conceptual development that starts from the premise of unity of place and people..." (Kloppenburger et al. 1996, 34). Community and civic culture could be revitalized through food production (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996).

Network analysts have stressed the formal characteristics and operation of social networks in economic institutions, whereas others have emphasized how embeddedness

corresponds to social capital and trust (Hinrichs 2000). The notion of social embeddedness refers to social ties, which are assumed to modify and enhance human economic interactions. Local markets, where people exchange goods and services, are embedded in a network of social relations and meaning systems of norms and rules (Douglas 1992, Barham 1997, O'Hara 2001 as cited in O'Hara and Stagl 2001).

Lyson and Green (1999) identify the relationship of the local food system to the development of social capital. Farmers, business owners and consumers get to know each other not just as business contacts but as members of the same community (Lyson and Green 1999). Their recurring social interactions draw diverse sectors of the community together and build the community's capacity for self-reliance, creative problem solving and conflict resolution in other spheres as well (Lyson and Green 1999). Local food systems, specifically farmers' markets, provide an arena for repeated social interaction, that creates linkages which Warner (1999) identifies are the key to the construction of community level social capital.

So can local food systems create social solidarity, build social networks and strengthen democracy? This is a huge task. If so, under what conditions does this happen? What nurtures it? What limits it? Local food systems can allow for control at the local level. Local food systems may not only be a viable and sustainable alternative to the global food system, but they may be a way to strengthen relationships among community members, build and expand social networks, and promote overall community well-being.

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are one component within a local food system. They may be an effective way to establish networks and social ties that expand to integrate the broader food consuming community as well as other institutions. For example, the farmers' market in Davis, California, is not only a place for buying local foods, but it has developed partnerships with civic and educational organizations (Podoll 2000). These partnerships include donations to food banks and physical improvements of city property at the public location of the market. Farmers' markets may serve as a place where people connect with others and remind them of their connection to place by creating relationships through social interaction.

Although many previous studies on farmers' markets have focused mostly on consumers, some research has been focused on vendors. Much of the literature on vendors, however, focused on their economic contributions to the community. Farmers' markets have been observed to be a foundation for vendors' entrepreneurial activities. Starting a business at the farmers' market requires little capital and experience, allows for experimentation with products, and helps to build a customer base (Hilchey, Lyson and Gillespie 1995).

Some authors also point out, however, that it is important to examine the role of vendors at the farmers' market: why they participate and how they contribute to the social interaction that characterizes local food systems. In a study of farmers' markets in New York State, vendors identified visiting with other customers and vendors, and enjoying the market experience as their most important motivations for participating in the

farmers' market (Lyson, Gillespie, and Hilchey 1995). This study was conducted by analyzing 115 surveys of vendors who rated the importance of several motivations for their participation. The vendors in the study identified social experiences as a primary motivation for participating in farmers' markets (Lyson, Gillespie, and Hilchey 1995). However, it is important to note that this study measured vendors' importance of social experiences with customers *and* other vendors as one measurement. Is there a difference of importance depending on whether social experiences are with customers or vendors?

Social, non-economic relationships and community bonds co-exist with economic relationships (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996). Hinrichs (2000) found these different types of relationships difficult to separate from one another. Hinrichs has identified tensions between vendors' social and economic orientations of the farmers market. How do these tensions color the Missoula farmers' market? Do economic orientations out-weigh social embeddedness—what Hinrichs refers to as social ties and trust? Block (1990 as cited in Hinrichs 2000, 297) defines marketness "...as expressing the supremacy of price and instrumentalism as revealing an enacted supremacy of self apart from society over others." Hinrichs (2000, 297) also points out that "marketness and instrumentalism might color and complicate social embeddedness and that this insight has been difficult to activate in local food systems analysis [because] proponents and activists have a tendency to celebrate social embeddedness within local food systems." This insight demonstrates that marketness and instrumentalism may play a greater role at farmers' markets than much of the literature has led us to believe. This thesis investigates the extent to which marketness and instrumentalism complicate social embeddedness within the Missoula farmers' market.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

I conducted research of the Missoula farmers' market in two stages. The first stage occurred in the fall of 2001 while I was working on a class project. The second stage occurred one year later, from fall 2002 through winter 2003. In both stages, my key research methods consisted of observations at the farmers' market and interviews with vendors.

My overall research approach is interpretative. During my observations and interviews I was interested in generating descriptive data including people's words, actions, and behaviors. My research methods were also naturalistic in that I was concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives. Naturalism is the principle that researchers should examine ordinary events as they occur in natural everyday settings (Neuman 2003). I chose to follow the naturalistic style and observe vendors at the farmers' market because by observing their interactions with other vendors and customers I was able to focus on what they do at the market. My position as participant observer enabled me to interact with vendors and the people they interact with in their market setting. My observations provided familiarity with the market operations, and enabled me to better understand what the vendors interviewed later told me. I approached the interviews as a way to uncover vendor's views through guided conversation as described in Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Anderson and Jack (1991). Matching observations and interview data provided confidence in the reliability of the findings from the data.

Data Collection

To begin my research on market vendors and why they come to the farmers' market I attended the Missoula Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings as an observer and customer during the first stage. I watched different vendors and took notes of interactions among vendors. Of particular interest to me were the interactions among different types vendors during selling time as well as before and after the market closed. My purpose was also to observe what vendors did during the course of the market.

I began formal observations late in the market season of 2001. The end of the season at farmers' market does not have the same atmosphere as during the peak of the season. The vendor slots are full in peak season, and the customers crowd the streets so that there is almost always a line at each table. The end of the season is cooler, and the frost prevents some vendors from participating. Fewer customers is also a factor in the decision for some vendors not to attend I later learned. In addition to observations, I more actively began participant observation, which included helping two vendors behind their tables. I helped with the display of the table, learning the importance of how products are arranged. I initiated conversations with many of the vendors in order to set up interviews after farmers' market had ended for the season. These interactions enabled me make contacts and prepare a set of general questions to be used in the interviews.

For preliminary interviews during the fall of 2001, I followed a list of questions and treated the interviews as guided conversations. In other words, I did not simply read through the list of questions and wait for answers; rather I allowed the interview to follow a natural pattern of conversation. The interviews during the second stage were structured

the same way however, the list of questions was derived from analysis of previous interviews. In one case, I called the vendor to ask a follow up question that was raised after I had interviewed another vendor.

For purposes of this research, I define a “vendor” as a farmer who comes to the Missoula Farmers’ market to sell produce that he or she has personally grown and/or harvested, or who comes to sell produce that has been grown and/or harvested by another household member. I selected vendors to interview through snowball sampling however, availability also influenced who I ended up interviewing. I selected vendors to interview by trying to include a variety of different people: some young, some old, and some White, some Hmong, some Russian, as well as vendors who sold different products. Others referred me to some vendors because he or she knew that vendor or because they had been involved in the market for a long time. I explained to each potential subject that I was doing a project for a class and that I was interested in the people who sell at the farmers’ market and what they do at market. In general I told them that I wanted to learn about the market from their point of view.

At this preliminary stage, I spoke with nine people who agreed to an interview. However, due to time restraints of finishing the class project during one semester, I interviewed six during the fall of 2001.

I began the second more formal stage of research in the same way as the preliminary stage. I attended the farmers’ market during the fall of 2002 and initiated conversations with vendors in order to set up interviews. I had the name and phone number of three vendors I had contacted earlier but had not been able to interview during the preliminary stage, and I was able to set up interviews with two of these vendors. The

third vendor told me he had not returned to sell at the market due to health reasons; therefore, I did not interview him.

During the second stage, I had identified three ethnic groups of vendors at the Missoula farmers' market. The "ethnic" categories were selected by my own judgment. Russians are really considered Caucasian; however, I have distinguished them as a separate group for purposes of my research because they are a unique immigrant group new to this area with strong cultural ties, and they are widely identified as so by themselves and other vendors at the Missoula farmers' market. My goal was to conduct interviews with a proportionate sample from each group. I did not know the total number of vendors by ethnicity and I was unable to obtain an official number of vendors as the number changes each week. The average number of vendors is 70 during the time of the season that I conducted my observation. There are about the same number of Caucasian and Hmong vendors at the market, and very few Russian vendors. I counted seven or eight Russian vendors on four different occasions at the market and I was told by a board member that there are no more than about ten Russian vendors at the market each week. I interviewed six Caucasian vendors, five Hmong vendors, and two Russian vendors (n=13). The reason for interviewing only two Russian vendors was largely because of the small Russian vendor population and their reluctance to be interviewed, which I will expand upon later in this chapter. Six of the vendors were men, seven were women. The male vendors consisted of four Caucasian and two Hmong. The female vendors consisted of two Caucasian, three Hmong, and two Russian. Six vendors had been selling at the market for one to five years, two vendors had been selling between six and ten years, three vendors had been selling for eleven to fifteen years, and two vendors had

been selling at the farmers' market for over twenty years. Three of the thirteen vendors I interviewed primarily sell flowers, nine are primarily vegetable farmers, and one primarily sells plants. Of the nine vegetable farmers I interviewed, six say that they are organic farmers. Thus, for the thesis I conducted a total of thirteen interviews with vendors, one interview with the market master, and one with a board member and co-founder of the market. I have changed the names of the vendors throughout my findings and discussion to protect their anonymity.

The Data

The data consist of the results of observations and interviews. I used a tape recorder to ensure the quality of my interview data, and I transcribed these interviews. After I conducted and transcribed each interview, I reviewed the data to ascertain themes and relevant quotations, and summarized the main points of each interview. This helped me to identify key themes and address them in subsequent interviews. I identified themes to be addressed in the thesis depending on how meaningful each was for the interviewee and how common it was for the vendors.

Some subjects were much more willing to talk about the farmers' market and themselves, while others did not have much to say. Occasionally there was an additional family member present during my interviews with vendors. Sometimes these family members provided additional information by occasionally participating in the interview, or reminding the interviewee about particular situations at the market.

Due to the wide variety of responses and different meanings of the market in different vendors' lives, I present an array of views. Some vendor's perceptions of the market and how it has changed contrasted drastically with other vendors' perceptions. Thus, there is a vast array of opinions. In presenting my findings I attempt to acknowledge common themes however, I felt it was important as well to present the views of the few vendors interviewed whose views were not common to all. I do this in part because of the limited number of vendors I interviewed and my goal to discuss and acknowledge the range of all opinions that emerged from the interviews.

Issues Encountered

During the preliminary stage of research, many vendors I spoke with were excited to talk to me about their involvement at the farmers' market, however there were five individuals who refused to be interviewed because they felt that he or she would not be a "good person to talk to." For example, one vendor told me that he would have let me hang out and help, but he did not have a busy table so he said I could not interview him. I told him that having a busy table was not important but that I was simply interested in his experiences at the market. However, he persisted to decline. Other vendors told me they did not feel that they played a large enough role at the market to be of any help to me. This type of response occurred frequently when asking Hmong vendors for an interview. I was clear that it was not important to have a busy table or to play a large role in the market. I found it hard to decide if they just did not want to be interviewed or if they really thought someone else played a more important role at the market. To

facilitate this process I approached a teenage Hmong vendor and talked with her. She was more willing to talk with me than other Hmong vendors. Her willingness was probably due to her English skills and greater familiarity of North American culture. I also interviewed a Hmong vendor because he is on the farmers' market board, and I felt that there would not be the same cultural and language barriers that I had found with other Hmong vendors. I interviewed him during the preliminary stage and during my second stage of research in the fall of 2001. He proved to be extremely important in referring me to other Hmong vendors for interviews.

I had similar trouble during my second season of research at the market gaining access to the Hmong and Russian community of vendors. Five more vendors refused to be interviewed stating they did not speak English well enough, or simply that they did not want to talk with me. One Russian vendor gave me her phone number and told me to call and speak with her daughter who can speak better English. I called four times before I was told not to call back. I also attempted on two separate occasions—one in person and one over the phone—to network with the person who works with the Russian community at the Refugee Assistance Program. I explained my research project. However, he was unsuccessful at contacting any vendors and introducing me. I contacted the Hmong representative on the board who I had interviewed during my preliminary stage of research. He gave me the names and phone numbers of four Hmong vendors who he thought would be willing to talk with me. Of those four, two agreed to be interviewed. One of the Hmong vendors that refused an interview said she was too busy, and the other said he was not interested. I also contacted a woman at the Montana Food Bank Network as suggested by one of my professors, and she was able to set up one phone interview

with one Russian vendor. Without the help of this one Hmong board member and another outside contact with the Russian vendors, I may not have been able to conduct some of these interviews.

Many of the Hmong and Russian vendors who refused to be interviewed cited language as the reason they would not be interviewed. I think that in some instances this was the case; however, I feel that there was a lack of trust of me as an outsider. I think that there was a great deal of uneasiness about giving me information about their lives. Those Russian and Hmong vendors who did allow me to conduct an interview were very reluctant to share information with me.

I conducted two interviews that required a translator. While necessary, I found this to be an extremely difficult way to conduct an interview for two reasons. First, I was not able to efficiently probe the respondent to talk more about a response. Second, the language barrier made it difficult to interpret what meaning the woman placed on the farmers' market due to the lack of me hearing directly his or her own original words rather than the translator's choice of words. I also found it difficult to turn the interview into more of a conversation. There was little elaboration on each subject area, possibly also due to my inability to directly pose probing questions.

Limitations and Strengths of Methods

One limitation of my method of sample selection is that I could not interview all the vendors I selected to be interviewed. Thus the actual sample may be biased in that there may be fundamental differences between those vendors who declined to be

interviewed and those who agreed. But really I do not know why some vendors agreed and others did not. Thus, without a random sample and small sample size, I am not able to generalize my findings to all vendors at the Missoula farmers' market. Rather, I restrict my findings as representative of the people I interviewed.

Nonetheless, I think this is a very informative data set. The strength of my interviews, when combined with my observations, is that they allow me to understand the meanings that people hold for their everyday activities (Marshall and Rossman 1999). Personal interaction can be a strength and a weakness of interviews as a method of research. According to Marshall and Rossman:

Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore, or they may be unaware of recurring patterns in their lives. The interviewer may not ask questions that evoke long narratives either because of a lack of expertise or familiarity with language or because of a lack of skill (1999, 110).

I believe that the character of my personal interaction was a strength of my interviews. I think that I have good listening skills and I was able to effectively frame questions. However, one of my weaknesses is my lack of familiarity with Hmong and Russian culture, and I may not have asked questions to these groups appropriately. But it is hard to tell. I think that another strength of my interviews was my enthusiasm and my interest in the vendors' experiences and opinions. The interviewer's enthusiasm for a topic and interest in what is being said encourage people to expand on what they say (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY OF MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET

The farmers' market in Missoula began in July of 1970. The founders of the market were Chinwon Reinhardt and Mavis McKilvey, both of whom had then been in Missoula for a short time. Each had attended a farmers' market in the areas where they used to live. I spoke with co-founder of the Missoula Farmers' Market, Chinwon Rhinhardt, and she told me that she and her husband started a garden as a hobby when they moved to Missoula. She and her friend Mavis discussed the appeal of having a farmers' market in Missoula. To them, the appeal of a farmers' market was the connectivity between local farmers with fresh produce and citizens who have no means to grow their own food. They had heard of a local farmer who, with no alternative market, was forced to dump a large harvest of produce after a supermarket broke their contract. This encouraged them to begin organizing the farmers' market. They began canvassing local farmers to participate, gathered the support of friends within the local government, and soon incorporated the non-profit farmers' market. The city passed an ordinance allowing a section of the street to be closed on Saturday mornings. According to one of the co-founders, the Missoula farmers' market unfolded in the following way:

The first years, when vendors were very scarce, we pressed our neighbors and friends who had gardens to strip their garden and come to sell. After a few years some of the original vendors dropped out to be replaced by a motley group of truck gardeners, backyard gardeners, hobby orchardists, and bee keepers...

The first years we had a retired forest service man who was a volunteer market master while his wife sold honey and other homegrown items. Mavis and I found ourselves wielding brooms and dustpans to prepare the market place. That end of town was a favorite spot for the homeless and the drunks. There were

often broken bottles and sometimes a sleepyhead. We manhandled heavy street barricades into place and hauled coffee urns to provide coffee and donuts at cost.

Initially there was some uneasiness from neighboring merchants who were afraid the farmers' market would create competition with their businesses. However, the original intent was to bring local farmers and gardeners with fresh produce together with citizens who had no means to grow their own food. After thirty two years, this remains the fundamental intent. The Missoula market is required by its enabling ordinance to limit produce to Western Montana grown and harvested.

The market began to grow and there has been a continuous influx of new vendors. A number of retired military veterans took up gardening and found the farmers' market both profitable and pleasurable. Then many Hmong settled in Missoula after the fall of Vietnam:

They were excellent farmers in their homeland, and they continued to farm in America in their old-world way of organic, labor-intensive manner to supplement their income. We ran an educational workshop for them every year for a few years to acquaint them of what sells well, what seeds would do better in our growing conditions and how to present their produce to attract shoppers. It took a season or two for them to become completely integrated into the ranks of vendors, but there is no denying that they have become a very important part of our market, without whose contribution of first-rate organic vegetables our market would not be such a wonderful place.

More recently some Russian immigrants have settled in the Missoula area and some have begun participating in the farmers' market. Most Russian vendors sell only a few things; however, many are slowly diversifying their products.

There have always been growing pains, which we have worked diligently to ease. Now our market is more diversified, with bread, jams and jellies, gourmet coffees to be had, and we seem to have become an institution, and some old-timers look back in nostalgia to the first years when shoppers came to buy bushels of vegetables to preserve, and there were not so many "yuppies" who come for a latte and a danish and meet their friends for a chat, contributing to congestion.

Current Operating Procedures

The Missoula farmers' market is run by a voluntary board of directors. The board sets policy, hires and pays employees. The only employees are the market master and two or three assistants. The board sets the rates for vendors' space which are currently based on linear footage. There are no term limits, and many people have been on the board for a very long time. When a board member resigns, there is an advertisement in the newspaper and anyone is welcome to send in their resumes. The current board members select who shall be signed on as a new board member. The position is strictly volunteer based. The board usually holds two meetings each year. The end of the season meeting is a public meeting held at the end of October. The first year there was not a public meeting held was 2002. Instead, comment cards were distributed to vendors. Those vendors who had comments or concerns were encouraged to write on the comment cards and return them to the board. The second meeting held by the board each season is a private meeting held in February. This is the meeting where the board discusses and evaluates the prior market season and decides if they will make any changes for the next season.

The market master is in charge of running the market on the ground. The market master and his assistants are in charge of collecting money from vendors who set up in the "first come first serve" spaces. He ensures that each vendor sets up his or her table within his or her allotted space, regulates maintenance of the physical market space, and most importantly enforces the rules.

There is currently a waiting list for reserved spaces. Each spring the board sends out a mailing to the vendors who had a reserved space the year before. Vendors can renew their reserved space by responding to this mailing and sending their seasonal payment, which varies depending on the size of the space (see appendix 1). Vendors who have reserved spaces are required to pay for the whole season in advance. This can be a problem for vendors who cannot afford to pay a lump sum in advance. Since some spaces are strategically better than others, vendors with seniority have access to the best spaces first. Some vendors with larger businesses are able to purchase two spaces. The first-come-first-serve spaces are for that purpose. Vendors have to arrive early to ensure they will get a space, especially in July and August in the peak of the season. The first-come-first-serve spots are paid for on the spot for the day. The market master and his assistants measure spots and make sure vendors set up their tables in an orderly fashion as efficiently use the provided space.

The Missoula Farmers' Market Regulations are very specific. (see appendix 1 for an official copy of the 2002 regulations.) The regulations specify that the Missoula farmers' market is a produce market and that the market board has authority over what may be sold. Market time is Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to noon running from May 11 through October 19 in 2002 and Tuesdays 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., July 9 through August 27 in 2002. No transactions are allowed before the opening bell or after the closing bell. Items for sale are specified as produce, flowers, plants, eggs, honey, bread, home-made jams and jellies in vacuum-sealed jars. Nothing frozen or value-added is allowed.

The regulations specify where vendors can park and when, how to go about setting up in first-come-first-serve spaces and when vendors are allowed to set up. There

is also a fee schedule for unreserved spaces. All sellers must display their name, address and phone number so that it is visible to the market master.

If vendors do not follow the rules they receive a violation notice. Upon receiving a second violation a vendor is excluded from selling at the market for one Saturday.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

The Missoula Farmers' Market has become an institution in Missoula over the past thirty two years. On the surface the market appears to be a very social place for both customers and vendors; however complex social dynamics exist among vendors within the market.

In this chapter I give a description of the vendors I interviewed and the way in which vendors construct meaning about their role. In addition, I discuss differences among vendors and the reasons given by different types of vendors for participating at the Missoula farmers' market. Then I also describe the social relationships among different types of vendors as identified by the vendors I have interviewed. And I identify some factors that appear to limit the development of social interaction among vendors at the Missoula farmers' market.

Why Vendors Started and Continue to Sell at the Missoula Farmers' Market

Vendors at the Missoula farmers' market participate for a range of reasons. I found these reasons to vary from participation as a hobby to having a business where the farmers' market is the primary source of income. I also found a range from social to economic reasons for participating. The reasons why vendors participate in the Missoula Farmers' Market influence the way each vendor makes meaning of the market. Each of

the 13 vendors I interviewed provided slightly different reasons for participating in the market. Their reasons were influenced by the number of years they had been attending the market, as well as how important they viewed the profits from the market for their income.

Most of the vendors I interviewed became involved because they had a backyard garden and sought a way to dispose of surplus produce. Four vendors said that before they knew about the market, each gave away or froze the surplus from their gardens. After going to the market as a customer, each saw other farmers selling surplus from their gardens and decided that they too could sell their surplus. Many decided to sell at the market rather than freeze or give away their surplus because the farmers' market looked like a fun activity that would provide a way to make a few extra dollars as well as enjoy social interaction. Another vendor always had a flower garden and had previously helped her mother-in-law sell vegetables at the market. But then her love for flowers, some convincing from her sister-in-law, and the interest of her young daughter, moved her to become a vendor herself. One vendor began selling products from an existing business after being convinced by his friends to do so. A younger vendor began selling to help her parents. Two vendors said they started selling as a way to make some extra money. One woman moved to Missoula and started a farm in order to establish a business and sell at the market. And another vendor became involved when his wife bought some plants in bulk for their home, they decided they did not need so many and began selling them at market.

Every vendor I interviewed said that earning income was one of many reasons he or she continued to be involved. However, for all but three vendors it was not the first

reason mentioned when asked why they keep selling at the farmers' market. For example, Lindsey said she goes back every summer, "mostly because it's a lot of fun to do and something to do over the summer, and something you get a little money on the side for."

Although profit certainly contributes to why vendors sell at market, it is not the primary reason. The primary reasons vendors sell at farmers' market are largely social. Three vendors stated that they enjoy the social aspect, the fellowship and that it's not for money. Seven of the vendors I interviewed find the market to be a place to meet new people and interact with people they already know. One vendor, Sue, said that farmers' market was "a way to get acquainted with people... meet people and become involved in the community." Another vendor, Rick, said that he and his wife usually make just enough money at market to go out to breakfast. He responded that it is the people at market that encourage him to go back every summer. Both customers and vendors are, "Fabulous! You see the same vendors all the time and the same customers, and pretty soon you get acquainted with them... and a ten minute yak with them every morning, with twenty-five or thirty people and pretty soon the time's gone!" Another vendor said she enjoys going to the market because "you see everyone over there, and you meet people." Helena said "if you're going to think about making money, you'd rather work and get paid five dollars an hour because you spend the whole week in the garden." Roberta even sells her produce for less than other vendors because she says "some people are poor and need help." Only two vendors said that profits are very important, and the only reason they continue to sell at the market. One of these vendors said he did not start

selling to make profits. But his business has grown, and now the social aspect is no longer as important.

The social aspect of the farmers' market is directly observable. On Saturday mornings I often observed vendors talking and laughing with one another. On one occasion, before the market bell had rung, signifying the start of selling time, two vendors were carefully arranging their products on their table and placing labels and prices on everything. As they did this they were laughing and talking with the people setting up at the two tables next to them. At the other end of the market a few tables were pushed together, and there were six or seven Hmong vendors helping one another set up their tables and unload their trucks. This is an indication of socialability and cooperation. Once the market bell rings much of the vendors' attention turns to customers. There is a great deal of interaction when a customer comes to look at the table; however, the interactions among vendors do not end once it is time to begin selling. If there are no customers, or if someone has a question about a product that one vendor does not know, he or she will often ask another vendor nearby if they know. I observed that most people are almost constantly talking with either another vendor or a customer. One young vendor told me "the market is very social, you get to interact with a lot of people and it kind of brings everyone closer together every year that we all do it."

Six of the vendors I interviewed told me they enjoy gardening for the market as a hobby. One vendor and his wife said:

Well we have to do something in the summertime... a hobby or something... usually go fishing, go on vacation... so many places and we thought we probably spent too much money on the vacation and we thought maybe we'd do something at the farmer market and we can get a little bit for money in the summertime.

Five other vendors said gardening and selling at the farmers' market is a hobby and that it is something fun to do. One Hmong vendor said that it was good for the Hmong people who sell at the market because it gives them something to do rather than sit around and be depressed.

Not only is gardening for the farmers' market a hobby, but four of the thirteen vendors I interviewed, it also is a form of exercise and a way to stay healthy. George said that he enjoys doing the farmers' market because it is fun, but also hard work. He said:

If you not do anything you feel your body kind of get heavy. You're eating because everything's so good, you eat and you get heavy quickly and because in the winter time we stay home beginning November to April we get heavy. Summertime you do the garden, you do everything like working from the time you get home you doing those things until 10 or 11pm before you stop and probably you get losing...in the summertime 5 or 6 pounds... yeah... you feel healthy.

Sue said that she and her husband spend their off season time drying and bagging fruit so that it will be ready to bring to the farmers' market in the late spring. She told me she enjoys participating in the farmers' market because "it keeps you busy in the wintertime, it is good exercise—keeping healthy." Two other vendors also said that selling at the farmers' market is good exercise.

The passion that vendors have for growing their products creates a sense of "pride" in the final product for a variety of reasons. Charlie and Helena both sell flowers, and each is very proud of the quality of their products. George takes pride in having natural, organic produce. Vendors are also proud of their products because they are a result of their time and hard work. Sue commented on preparing for farmers' market:

It is a lot of work! The people who come and buy do not realize how much work bringing that to the market is—it doesn't just jump out of the ground. There's a lot of washing and everything else—packaging and planning...

Most other vendors also commented on the hard work involved with selling at the market. Helena told me that many Hmong vendors who sell huckleberries often spend twelve hours a day traveling to a harvesting location and hiking up the mountain picking berries. She said many do not even sit down to eat lunch.

This pride in their product is a reason for the importance vendors place on displaying their products and arranging them in a certain way on their tables at the market. One vendor interviewed said, "I'm proud of what I do and I'm proud of my displays. I set up and I decide the arranging." Jack said he takes great pride in his displays, and it is a way to show off all his hard work. Part of displaying everything in a certain way is due to the pride they have in their products, but also because they want to sell it. Sue said that "we don't do it just for fun, we do it for the profits too, and naturally we want to get the most we can for our produce." This shows that there is an obvious interest in actually selling their products.

The farmers' market has created opportunities for vendors to find their niche and really get involved in their hobby. For those vendors for whom farmers' market is more of a business than a hobby, the market allows entrepreneurs the same opportunities to find their niche. Many vendors begin to focus on selling only a few things that no one else sells or that they are good at growing. Thus, it seems as though the farmers' market helps to create a specialized interest in a certain type of product, while creating that product becomes a passion that keeps vendors coming back to sell at the market every year. Jack has an extreme passion for seeing a new product, "you don't know what you're going to get. When the flower blooms, you are the first person in the world to have seen it!" This same sense of passion for products was demonstrated by the two

other flower growers that I interviewed as well. Sue also demonstrated her interest in specializing her production and trying new unique products. She has become very involved in producing dried fruit, which keeps her busy all winter and has created a market for a product that no other vendors have.

Having found their niche, three vendors told me they feel a sense of pride in having products that are different than what the other vendors have. Sue said proudly during our interview that she and her husband “are the only ones who sell dried fruit.”

Jack told me that he and his wife have:

Always tried to be just a little different than the next guy. We had one vendor, he raised carrots and he would have freshly grown carrots in June—he was doing something different. This is the thing, the vendors all try to be just a little bit different; we try not to be a carbon copy.

Charlie also told me that it is important to have products that are unique and unusual.

Though I did not have a large sample nor conduct a random sample, three of the six Caucasian vendors I interviewed were more concerned with having unique products. On the other hand, all the Hmong vendors I interviewed (n=5) enjoyed new products and producing quality, but did not care about being original. Each would rather share information. None of the Russian vendors I interviewed commented on this. Two Caucasian vendors told me that their sense of pride and product differentiation is diminished when other vendors begin to sell the same thing. For example, Jack expressed a sense of annoyance and disagreement with his perception that the Hmong vendors copy what the other vendors sell.

Social Relationships among Vendors

In this section I identify the social relationships among different types of vendors both inside and outside the Missoula farmers' market. Although many vendors claim to greatly value the social aspect of the market, there appears to be constraints on the types of social interactions the vendors I interviewed have with each other. Social relationships among vendors appear to be limited by interest in profits, competition, and ethnic difference.

Interactions within the Market

Many vendors participate in the market for social reasons, and thus social relationships with other vendors are important to them. Most vendors socialize during set up before the market; however, four vendors said that they do not socialize with other vendors during the market because they are too busy selling their products. Once the market starts these four vendors usually do not get a break until noon. Only two vendors said that they do not care to interact with other vendors at the market, both of whom identified profits as the primary reason for participating.

Given that profits are not the primary goal among most of the vendors I interviewed, many vendors said that there was cooperation among themselves rather than competition. George said that vendors often help each other, "you can put your space together and sell together, helping each other... if a vendor has someplace to go, you have to cover for that person too." During my interview with Rick, he mentioned that both he and the vendor next to him sell the same kind of flower. The two vendors talk

often about how many flowers the other sold that day, and are not competitive. I also observed an older man on the other side of the market from where I was participating had finished selling early for the day. The vendor with whom I was participating saw that this older man was packing up and jumped out of his chair saying “Wayne’s done, I’ll grab your table for you... you want to come Kate?” We helped carry Wayne’s table to the parking lot and returned to the table. This willingness to help another vendor displays cooperation.

A few vendors, who expressed that profits were important, said that competition rather than cooperation defined vendor interaction. For example, Jack and his wife use their profits from the farmers’ market to travel annually to national gladiola conventions, and thus have a vested interest in making profits. Jack said that the market has become a business, “you are there as a business person, you have to be—if you aren’t, why are you there?” His lack of interest in socializing and his perception that his products are better quality than other vendors’ display his economic orientation and competitiveness.

Similarly, Sue said she enjoys going to market because she is very competitive: “I never used to think that I was a competitive person, but when I started selling by myself then I thought well I’m more competitive than I thought.” Although she identifies competition as a motivation for her participation in the farmers’ market, this vendor also values cooperation among her fellow vendors. In describing interactions among herself and her neighbors she says, “we help each other out... if I forgot something they lend it to me or if they forgot something I’ll loan it... helping one another out with money... quarters and sacks and things...”

Another aspect of cooperation identified by the vendors is bartering with other vendors. The barter system is a common practice at the farmers' market. Usually a vendor will take one of his or her own products and bring it to exchange for another vendor's product. In addition to getting access to new products they do not grow themselves, this exchange system also maintains social interaction among vendors at the market.

Two vendors identified the farmers' market specifically as a place where they can meet and talk to other farmers. Kyle's crops were badly hurt by a hail storm last summer, and he said that he found it beneficial to be able to discuss his situation with other farmers. Diane told me that:

For farmers it (the market) is a place where we can talk about—a lot of times, especially last summer—there's some really hard weeks with rain storms or hail or whatever—at least we have some other people that we can relate to. Like a lot of people—they see hail but they don't know that it just destroyed your whole week's worth of livelihood or your whole summer for that matter—and it's good to talk about that.

Charlie said that one of his ways of interacting with other vendors is by teasing them in a friendly way about their displays and/or products, although he only does this with other Caucasian vendors like himself. He stated that he does not interact with the Hmong or the Russian vendors. He has never approached a Hmong or Russian vendor in an attempt to socialize because he assumes that none of them know English. On this latter point, he is not the only one who has made this assumption.

I observed little friendly social interaction between the Hmong and Caucasian vendors at the farmers' market. When there is a disagreement, white vendors often refer to the Hmong by saying they talked to "the leader" and told him to talk to "his people."

Although there is a language barrier, most Hmong know enough English to carry on a general conversation.

Although most vendors I interviewed enjoy the social aspect of market and meeting new people, my data suggest that the new people that vendors meet and interact with are similar to themselves in terms of class, ethnicity and type of farming. Vendors interact mostly with other vendors who are the especially the same ethnicity or with vendors who are set up next to them. Diane said she and her husband have become very close friends with the couple that has the stand next to them “although I think we would have become friends with them anyway, we have kids the same age...,” and they are both the same type of organic farmers.

Interactions outside the Market

Most vendors interviewed said they interacted with other vendors outside of the market once and awhile, but not often. The exceptions to this are some Hmong and Russian vendors. Two Hmong vendors said that they interact with many of the Hmong vendors who all know each other because they came to the US together. A Russian vendor said that she interacts with other Russian vendors at church, but that they all knew each other before becoming involved in the market. However, one Caucasian and one Hmong vendor said that they are too busy working other jobs and in the garden to have time to socialize with other vendors outside of the market. For example, Sue told me:

There’s a lot of things we have to do in the wintertime we don’t do in the summertime. When you are involved in the market, that’s about all you get done.

All of the vendors that do socialize outside of the market were friends before they were involved in the market; therefore, it appears that the market is not a place where vendors make new friends with other vendors, at least.

Changes Identified by Vendors within a Growing Market

The Missoula farmers' market is growing. Each year there are more customers and more vendors. The market is at the point where there is not room for all the vendors that want to sell, and some have to be turned away. Last year the number of customers in attendance was at an all time high. The market master said the farmers' market:

Is just exploding! There are more vendors... and this year was just... the customers... I never saw so many customers. It is at the point now that we're going to have to take measures to enlarge the market, or start to say sorry we have no room.

It is inevitable that with such an expanding market things will change. Vendors' attitudes and comments about why and how the Missoula farmers' market has changed varied due to the amount of time the vendor had been selling at the farmers' market, the importance of profits, and for some Caucasian vendors, their prejudice against non-whites. The major changes identified by vendors that I will discuss in this section are: (1) the lack of space as a result of growth of vendors at the market, (2) the growth of the market in terms of commercialization, (3) vendors' views on how consumer buying patterns have changed, (4) and the perceived change in social atmosphere at the farmers' market.

The Issue of Space

An issue of most concern for many of the vendors I interviewed was space. Specifically that space for growth is limited. Many vendors thought that the market should be able to continue to grow and expand, and that the issue of space was greatly limiting growth potential. Nine of the vendors I interviewed said that space is becoming an enormous problem. Charlie said that it's sad... "Mel runs around trying to squeeze people in... and it's just not fun. It would be nice to have more space for the market to expand." Apparently the board has tried to expand the market but received opposition from nearby residents. Currently vendors complain that they are forced into corners where customers sometimes don't see them, or they are positioned so closely next to another vendor, they don't have room to move. Helena told me:

I'd like to see them get a bigger space so everybody doesn't have a problem with space—because today I see a lot of problems with space and it is not very convenient for all people because some vendors get squished together and they don't have room to move.

Michele also said space is a problem; "it's hard, we have to get there at six in the morning and wait. It would be nice if they had a bigger spot."

Another space-related problem is parking for both customers and vendors. In the market's current location it is very difficult for vendors to unload and then find a parking space, and customers are forced to park blocks away and then try to carry their purchases back to their cars. Many vendors interviewed suggested that the market organizers try to find a better location, and many would prefer a more permanent place with some sort of roof for protection from sun and rain.

Commercialization

Many vendors thought that the market should be able to grow and continue expansion. Six vendors told me the market has potential to grow and thought that more growth in terms of more vendors and longer selling time would benefit the consumers and the vendors. These six vendors were not concerned about the commercialization of the market. Rick told me “the market is big business for some people! Some make about one thousand dollars on a Saturday!” Although he personally does not have a large business or make very much money, he is not concerned if other vendors at the market do make large profits. George and Bill both told me that the market has not grown enough. Each would like to see expansion in the number of vendors and customers that the farmers’ market attracts. The two vendors stressed that the selling time needs to be extended to accommodate the growing numbers of customers and vendors. They feel that if the selling time were extended that vendors would be able to sell more produce and customers would have more time to buy more products. It would provide an opportunity for vendors to expand their businesses.

In contrast, two vendors are concerned about the market’s growing commercialization. Sue was concerned that the market would become commercialized the way Pike’s Market in Seattle has become. According to this vendor, the problem with Pike’s Market is the large size of the market, the lack of connection between producers and consumers, and the idea of a market as a “tourist trap.” She is concerned that the growing commercialization of the Missoula farmers’ market may encourage it to become so large and encompassing that it would no longer exist as a market for the local community.

Vendors Views on Consumer Buying Patterns

Over the years, vendors also report there has been a change in what customers want to buy. Many customers want different kinds of vegetables now than they did previously. Lindsey's mother told me that twenty years ago customers did not know how to use cilantro, hot chili and basil, and now they buy a lot of it. Diane told me that: "we always did salad mix, just a little bit, and now we sell a ton of salad mix." She also told me that she grows a lot of specialty vegetables like fennel and arugula. About ten years ago these vegetables did not sell very well and now customers become upset when she runs out of fennel and arugula.

Another vendor expressed her view that many customers have stopped going to supermarkets as frequently because they now want to buy organic and fresh food. Helena said, "these days people don't want to buy stuff from the store because they're all chemicals, they'd rather come to the fresh vegetables." It is important to point out that there may be a perception among consumers that the market sells all organic vegetables, but this is not true. Vendors are not required by the farmers' market regulations to sell only organic produce. Some vendors do sell organic produce and some do not. Organic produce is indicated by a sign posted at the vendors' table. There had been an organic certification association which worked to certify farmers in Western Montana as organic farmers until recently. Now the state of Montana is able to certify farmers as organic. Thus, produce sold at the market is not required to be organic; however, it is required to be fresh, that is locally grown.

The quantities that customers buy at the farmers' market have changed over the years. Sue said that: "people used to buy in quantities for canning and freezing and

there's still a few of the real older people that do it but for the most part they just buy for the week." More customers are coming to the farmers' market and they are buying fewer quantities of produce. Instead of buying for long term, many customers buy food for the week, or even just for dinner one night.

Customers have found the farmers' market to be a place where they can also buy freshly cut bouquets of flowers in addition to vegetables. More customers now come to the market to buy fresh flowers, whereas the market for fresh cut flower bouquets was not so large previously. As consumer preference has changed over time, vendors also modify their products to accommodate consumer preference. As fresh flower bouquets became more popular with consumers, more vendors started selling flowers. Consumer preference has also shifted to organic vegetables, and although some vendors have always produced only organic vegetables, some other vendors have made efforts to begin organic production.

Social Atmosphere—you cannot rely on your neighbor?

As the market grows, it is inevitable that the social atmosphere will change—as the social atmosphere within any organization changes with the organization's growth.

One vendor told me:

The social atmosphere twenty five years ago cannot exist with the number of vendors now. Now profit has become an important focus—you used to be able to rely on your neighbor, but not today.

Other vendors also told me that the market used to be much more social, and now money is becoming more important. My earlier discussion of competition revealed that most vendors who had been selling at the market for a long time had invested time and energy

into their products, found their niche, and through pride in their products became more competitive and thus cared more about money and less about their neighbor.

Perceptions of Hmong Vendors by other Vendors at the Market

Four of the six Caucasian vendors I interviewed expressed negative perceptions of Hmong vendors at the farmers' market. The perceptions held by these four vendors include the idea that the Hmong are taking over the market, various rumors about harvesting practices, and the perception of an absolute language barrier. I also present the contrasting perceptions of the two other Caucasian vendors I interviewed that the Hmong have raised the standards of the Missoula farmers' market.

Competing against a Whole Community?

One Caucasian vendor expressed an extreme view and attributed all the changes at the market to the growth within the Hmong community. His largest concern was his perception that as a Caucasian vendor, he is competing against the whole Hmong community. He explains:

The reason we have a problem with over crowding is the fact that they proliferate—you do not compete one to one against the Hmong, I compete against a community, you as a Caucasian are competing against a community.

Although Hmong farmers are numerous at the market, three Caucasian vendors I interviewed referred to the Hmong as “those who are taking over the market.” However, Diane told me that the market has the same number of Hmong vendors now as it did ten years ago, there are just more of every one else now. There are Hmong vendors who

began selling at the market within the past ten years; however, the Hmong vendors are not the only group of farmers contributing to the growth of the market in terms of numbers of vendors. The market master has a registration list of vendors during the market season, although he informed me that those records are not saved. In order to find the exact proportion of Hmong and Caucasian vendors, one would have to attend the market every week and count the vendors (the numbers of vendors varies weekly). The market master estimated that the proportion of vendors at the farmers' market is sixty percent Caucasian and forty percent Hmong. In estimating the proportion of vendors by ethnicity, he included the Russian vendors as part of the Caucasian percentage, although he told me the number of Russian vendors is very small. The market master perceives that this proportion of vendors has remained constant over the past ten years. As the number of overall vendors participating in the market has increased, the proportion of Caucasian and Hmong vendors remains the same. Thus, the perception that the Hmong vendors have caused most of the growth changes at the market in the past ten years appears to be incorrect.

Three Caucasian vendors have the perception that the Hmong sell products at their tables that they did not grow in their own personal garden. Although a farmer may not own the land he or she farms, what is the harm in sharing land and farming with family and/or friends?

Rumors about Hmong Vendors

Feelings among some Caucasian vendors that the Hmong are taking over the market correlate with rumors mentioned about the Hmong's farming techniques. For

example, one vendor told me some rumors she had either heard or made up about the Hmong's harvesting of huckleberries. She said they have been known to just pull the plant out of the ground. In contrast, one Hmong vendor I interviewed told me that the Hmong people are very hard workers. Helena said that many of the Hmong vendors who sell huckleberries often spend twelve hours a day traveling to a harvest location and hiking up the mountain picking berries. She described the hard work of picking berries saying that each little berry needs to be carefully picked off the plant.

Another Caucasian vendor told me that comments have been made about customers being wary of buying produce from the Hmong because you do not know the growing conditions. She suggests consumers question if it is organic. Many vendors at the farmers' market sell produce that is not organic. There is no rule demanding produce be organic. Thus, unless there is a sign up that the produce is certified organic it may not be organic. There is an official process for a farmer to become certified organic, which I discussed previously.

As noted above, there is ambiguity in the rules, and some vendors use it to their advantage. Two Caucasian vendors adamantly claimed Hmong vendors are responsible for the ambiguity in the rules. For example, one vendor told me: "I have a real problem with that community! The Hmong community has been there at 3:00 a.m. to commandeer their spots, and they save spots! They put a rock or a piece of paper down! You just don't DO that!"

Although individual Caucasian vendors shared different rumors about Hmong vendors, the general finding is that there are rumors about Hmong vendors. These

rumors stem from three Caucasian vendors' strong perceptions of how the Hmong vendors farm and conform to the rules of the market.

Language Barriers

Many Caucasian vendors I interviewed described their perception that most Hmong and Russian vendors do not speak English. A few vendors commented that Hmong and Russian vendors have lost sales because of a language barrier. Charlie thought it was sad that the Hmong and Russian vendors cannot connect with people, both customers and other vendors at the market.

As noted above, there is little friendly social interaction between Hmong and Caucasian vendors at the market. And although there is a language barrier, most Hmong know enough English to carry on a general conversation. Charlie said, "there is a definite culture gap" but he wishes the board would take initiative to promote integration.

Hmong Vendors Raised the Standards

Despite negative comments by a couple vendors, many vendors acknowledged the Hmong's positive contributions to the market. Kyle said, "Hmong farmers brought high quality produce and improved the market." This did not happen right away. Some vendors said that at first the Hmong would bring dirty produce without washing it. One of the co-founders of the market thirty two years ago, helped run workshops for Hmong vendors to teach them what American consumers looked for when buying produce, and how to display the produce so that it was aesthetically pleasing. Two Caucasian vendors

I interviewed give the Hmong credit for improving their marketing skills, and now they could very well be as Kyle says, “the driving force of the market.”

Administration of the Farmers’ Market

The third major finding among vendors I interviewed is a concern with the administration of the farmers’ market. Vendors were most concerned with the enforcement of rules at the market, restrictions on selling particular items, and the organization and operation of the board of directors.

As noted in Chapter Four, the farmers’ market board has the authority to amend the rules. The board hires a market master to be the person on the ground enforcing the rules. The market master—who was said by some to be hired because of his “drill sergeant manner”—told me that:

With a market this large you need strict rules and regulations. There’s penalties for not obeying the rules...we have an opening bell and a closing bell. A lot of people don’t agree with that... and that’s been an issue.

Enforcement of Rules

Six of the vendors I interviewed identified problems with the way rules are enforced and inconsistency with enforcing rules. Many vendors talked about the process of being charged for a space. The market master and his assistants are responsible for collecting money for first-come-first-serve spaces, measuring spaces to make sure everyone is within their limit, and making sure no one sells before or after the bell. There is a lot to keep track of on a busy summer market with over one hundred vendors in

attendance. One vendor said, “the market master makes up his own rules”—meaning that when it is convenient for the master to change a rule or choose when to enforce it, he does. With so many vendors I imagine it is hard to enforce all the rules, and therefore some vendors appear to get away with breaking the rules. However, if the rules were not strictly enforced—in addition to the growing levels of competition—it would be chaos.

The standard size is six feet and if a vendor has a umbrella hanging over the six foot line, he or she has to pay an additional fee for the extra foot. Some vendors claim that the rules for being charged for a space are inconsistent in that sometimes they are enforced and sometimes they are not. Diane said “it’s really aggravating...they have these rules and you can’t be a foot this way or a foot that way. My husband and [the market master] are always screaming at each other.” Helena said that she had been set up in one spot and the master yelled at her and told her she had to move, while on a different occasion he had let another vendor set up in the same space. She attributes this to prejudice because she claims that the market master discriminates against Hmong vendors by enforcing rules when they will affect Hmong vendors and not enforcing them when they would affect Caucasian or Russian vendors.

Three vendors commented that the rules are enforced with a degree of intensity that seems to vibrate around the farmers’ market. Diane said that the “enforcement of the rules could be gentler.” Kyle said that the market master and his assistants have a “Nazi police mentality—I know they have to enforce the rules, but sometimes it’s confrontational.”

Helena and Sue said that having strict rules is important because otherwise it would not be fair for some vendors. Strict rules should be enforced consistently and

apply to all equally. However, Kyle mentioned that “confrontations come up because sometimes their rules aren’t clearly specified... so whenever there’s ambiguity about rules, people try to push rules, and then the market cops snap.” Charlie said that there is a lot of animosity between the all the vendors and the people who run the market.

The Farmers’ Market Board of Directors

Five vendors identified problems with the enforcers of rules as well as with the creators of the rules—the board. One vendor referred to both the board and the market master and said “they need to respect their vendors more because without vendors there is no market.” Charlie said the he has brought up issues the board before and nothing ever happens except that they have a vendetta against him now. He went on to say, “you get the problem done if you go to the top dog, but you don’t get the problem done with the top dog if they’re going to not like you for it afterwards.” Bill said that there was a problem with regulations this year and the issue went to the board but they have not responded yet. He would not disclose the specifics of the issue.

Four of the vendors I interviewed thought that the board members as well as the market master and assistants get caught up in their roles and hold grudges against vendors who approach them with problems and suggestions. Diane also told me:

I think their rules are a little too intense. And I think that they forget that their job is to help have a good farmers’ market and part of having a good farmers’ market is having the vendors make money. I just think they get so into their roles that they forget the bigger picture.

Another vendor discussed an occasion she attended a public board meeting. She said everyone talked for hours about how to fix this one problem, “the board members

listen and then they refuse to change anything.” One point mentioned by a three vendors is that the board members are “old-timers” who do want the market to grow. One vendor said, “the people on the board don’t want it to grow... why stifle something that’s thriving!” Most vendors thought it would be a good change to replace the board with new members. Diane said:

I think it would be a great thing. The people who are on the board have been there a very long time. I think the farmers’ market has changed a lot and these guys—it’s really hard for them to watch this.

Another vendor agreed, “the board means well but the potential of the market is being held back.” Kyle identified the board as “kind of a social club—a badge of civic involvement they refuse to take off.” I interviewed a board member and she acknowledged that most board members have been there a long time, and that things have changed a lot. She herself thought some new people should get in there.

Selling Restrictions

Products sold by vendors at the farmers’ market are restricted to items grown or gathered by the vendor in Western Montana. Produce includes fresh vegetables and herbs, and fresh or dried fruits. Items must be left in their natural state with a minimum of thread, glue or string. And processed foods are not allowed. Some of the vendors I interviewed expressed discontent with the limits of what they can sell at the market. And in one case a vendor claims the regulations have limited her entrepreneurial creativity.

Diane is not pleased with how specific the rules are about what kinds of things you can sell. She said she was not allowed to sell an herbal salve, and her daughter and

her friend grew Indian-Corn and made necklaces that they brought to sell, Diane told me that:

There was a big issue. It was really terrible. Someone saw and made a big fuss that they weren't allowed to sell it. The girls were in tears... sometimes rules don't work... they bend and they might change. I just think their rules could be a little more accommodating... not more flexible, just a little more all encompassing.

The girls were allowed to sell the Indian-Corn necklaces for that one day, however the market master made it clear that this type of product was not allowed to be sold at the farmers' market.

Chinwon told me that the Missoula farmers' market board is constitutionally opposed to including value-added products such as arts and crafts. The herbal salve that Diane was not allowed to sell is considered a value-added product. They feel that these products are non-perishable and would compete unfairly for space with produce. The Peoples' Market, located a block away from the farmers' market and held at the same day and time, was established as the value-added arts and crafts alternative to the farmers' market. Chinwon stated that they have surveyed other farmers' markets and have found that many "with mixed goods languish and die a slow death." They acknowledge that farming is hard work and feel that farmers need not be placed in a position of unnecessary competition. Thus, Chinwon and the board firmly stand on their position to only sell fresh and local vegetables, herbs and fruit. The opinions of other vendors I interviewed vary. Some vendors would like to see the market expand to other products, while others are content with the limitations and pleased that the arts and crafts market is not a part of the farmers' market.

It appears that it is difficult to draw the line of distinction between value-added, arts and crafts, and locally grown, harvested products. While the Missoula farmers' market enables vendors to sell home-made bread, jams, jellies, dried fruits, flowers, plants, cider, and honey—flowers and plants cannot be sold in decorated pots or vases, and non-edible items must left in a natural state (i.e., no dyes or paints) with a minimum of string, wire, etc. In an effort to remain a produce market, a great deal of consideration is required of the board in making any changes.

Summary of Findings

The first major group of findings is the motivations of different types of vendors to participate and different vendors' orientations to the market. Vendors' motivations for selling at the market are characterized by both affective and economic reasons. Although there are many related variables, it seems that vendors who do not make much profit attend mostly for social reasons, while it appears that once a vendor begins to make significant profits, the social reasons for going decrease in importance as the profits become more important. Vendors who do not make much profit do not acknowledge competition within the market or in their own actions, while those who make profits view competition as an important characteristic of the farmers' market. Many of the vendors I interviewed said that they sell at the farmers' market because it is fun. One vendor said she likes colors and arranging things, and meeting people. Most vendors interviewed said they enjoyed interacting with the community and making a nickel or two. In general, socializing and meeting new people were said to be larger motivations than

profit, although they clearly would not participate if there were no profits. Most people saw producing for market as a hobby that keeps you busy and provides exercise. The hobby often becomes a passion for one particular product, but participating in the farmers' market itself may also become a hobby. Passion for products, finding their niche, and profits often leads to changes in what vendors sell over time. Most vendors started out selling excess from their own garden. As profits become more important and time is invested, most vendors evaluate what products sell and they try new things. They expand their garden and if something becomes too time consuming and not worth the money they make from it, they stop producing it and find another product. Usually they try to find a product that not many other people sell. This helps them to be different from other vendors and attract customers. Vendors are proud of their products when they are unique and when they are popular with consumers. Pride does appear to be correlated with competition.

The second major finding is that vendors' social relations are in part characterized by the difference between their economic and social orientations. There are also tensions between ethnic groups which limit social relationships. The vendors I interviewed do have special relationships among each other. Among those I interviewed, they said it was common to help the vendors selling next to or nearby him or her with various tasks as well as engage in conversation. I found also that members of different groups at the market behave differently with each other, and often with tension. The groups I have identified are differentiated by the types of products vendors sell, the length of time selling at the market (referred to as old-timer and new-comer), farming techniques (specifically organic and non-organic) and ethnicity. There appeared to be some tension

due to differences based on ethnicity, farming techniques, length of time involved with the market, and family networks. These factors are also strongly related to each other. I found these differences to play a significant role in the ability or inability of vendors to form networks, social ties, and develop trust beyond their own ethnic groups. This tension between ethnic groups of vendors at the market has implications on the types of social relationships developed among vendors. Most commonly this was the Caucasian vendors' assumption of a language barrier and cultural difference. From this tension, some Caucasian vendors have developed negative perceptions and rumors about the Hmong vendors, which greatly hinder social interaction between these two groups.

The third major finding is vendors' concerns regarding the administration of the Missoula farmers' market. Vendors I interviewed expressed concern with the way rules are enforced and with the processes of change within the bureaucratic system of authority. Animosity between vendors and the administration of the market appear to heighten the social tensions between different types of vendors at the market and further limit social interaction. The farmers' market is growing and thus change is occurring. With growth the administrators of the market find it more important to enforce the rules, while this task becomes more difficult with the growth of vendors. Many vendors I spoke with found ambiguity in the rules and expressed concern with the enforcement of rules. Vendors also expressed concern about the process of change within the market and the difficulties of presenting issues and concerns to the board of directors.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As shown throughout the findings in the previous chapter, there are complex social dynamics among vendors at the Missoula farmers' market. In this chapter I further discuss these social dynamics by highlighting the key findings as identified in the previous chapter and examine the implications for the Missoula Farmers' market. The three major findings I discuss are the orientations and motivations of vendors participating in the market, the social dynamics and relationships among different types of vendors, as well as vendors' concerns with how the market is run and the administration of the market.

The first major finding is the orientations and motivations of vendors participating in the market. Vendors' participate in the farmers' market as both social and economic, and the differences these market orientations present. Then I examine the effects of these differences on the farmers' market as a local alternative market. I argue that the difference between social and economic motivations for vendors' participation is closely related to two other related factors; the difference between cooperation and competition among vendors.

Second, I discuss how different types of vendors interact with one another. Although vendors I interviewed do have special relationships with one another, for example, engaging in conversation and helping neighbor vendors at the market; these relationships rarely extend beyond specified groups of vendors. Vendors differentiated by the types of products they sell, the length of time selling, farming techniques, and

especially ethnicity have limited interaction. These differences play a role in characterizing interactions between different groups of vendors. A factor that largely influences vendors' social relationships is tensions between ethnic groups. I also discuss the perceptions and concerns between vendors from different ethnic groups and the changing social dynamics within the market. Such ethnic tensions have important implications for the farmers' market as a place for social interaction among all types of vendors. These multiple and crosscutting tensions have increased with the growth of the market, and have created additional tensions for the vendors.

The third major finding is vendors' concerns regarding the administration of the Missoula farmers' market. I discuss various concerns with the administration and rules of the farmers' market as brought up by vendors I interviewed. This finding directly relates to the growth of the market as it suggests a transition from an informal market to a formal market governed by rules and procedures. While some vendors I interviewed support this changing organizational structure, others resent it. The structure of management and authority of the Missoula farmers' market, as vendors describe it, is compared to what the literature suggests about local food systems.

Taken together, I discuss how the growth of the market has influenced social relationships through the growing business orientation of the market, vendor competition, ethnic difference, and increased enforcement of formalized rules. There is a relationship between the affect these changes have on vendors and the length of their involvement and size of their business. The longer they have been involved and the more their business has grown over time, the greater they appear to be affected by the change. These changes can often restrict social relationships among some vendors and diminish the capacity of

the farmers' market as an avenue of social action for vendors. Finally I speculate how these changes will affect the future of Missoula's farmers' market, and question what action can be taken to shape these changes and preserve the farmers' market as a viable alternative to impersonal global food markets.

The Difference between Vendors' Social and Economic Orientation to the Farmers' Market

Although there are many related variables, it appears that vendors who do not make much profit attend the farmers' market mostly for social reasons. Once a vendor begins to make profits and value this activity for its economic profits, the social reasons for participating appear decrease. For most vendors, however, socializing and meeting new people remain the main motivations, although vendors clearly would not participate if there were no profits.

Vendors' views about their own orientation at the market may explain their behavior. It appears common that when a vendors' orientation is primarily economic, the vendors' behavior is characterized by a degree of marketness and instrumentalism. Block (1990 as cited in Hinrichs 2000, 297) defines marketness "as expressing the supremacy of price and instrumentalism as revealing an enacted supremacy of self apart from society over others." It also appears that when a vendors' orientation to the market is social, the vendors' behavior is characterized by social embeddedness. Social embeddedness refers to sense of social connection, reciprocity and trust (Hinrichs 2000). It is difficult to determine the degree of marketness and the degree of social embeddedness of vendors at

farmers' market. It seems that the more profits a vendor makes the more oriented he or she is with the marketness of the farmer's market. Vendors who make small profits are more interested in the social interactions, and thus are more socially embedded in the market. Hinrichs (2000) argues that the tension between embeddedness, marketness and instrumentalism is evident in how farmers view farmers' markets. Many farmers participate in farmers' market both because of the premium they get over wholesale prices and because they enjoy the market experience as a social event (Davis 1978 as cited in Hinrichs 2000). I found this to be true in most cases among the farmers/vendors I interviewed, especially those who had an established business and sold products at wholesale outside the farmers' market.

In a study of farmers' markets in New York State, vendors identified visiting with other customers and vendors, and enjoying the market experience as their most important motivations for participating in the farmers' market (Lyson, Gillespie, and Hilchey 1995). In my study of the Missoula Farmers' Market, I found the same general results. Vendors identified the social aspect of the farmers' market as their primary motivation for participating; however, profits were an important aspect as well. While vendors enjoyed talking with people, they did not forget the role they play as a vendor at the market. Social ties and personal connections in no way preclude instrumental behaviors or the relevance of price; embeddedness does not entail the complete absence of market sensibilities (Hinrichs, 2000). It would be very rare to see a vendor give away a product regardless of the social connection. Direct agricultural markets demonstrate that the social and economic are difficult to separate (Hinrichs 2000).

Farmers' markets have not only been recognized as a place to promote social connections, but also as a place to promote entrepreneurialism and economic development. As Hilchey, Lyson, and Gillespie (1995) found in their survey of nine farmers' markets in New York, farmers' markets enhance business opportunities by allowing vendors to test new products, expand their business, and expand their customer base. Most vendors in the present study saw producing for market as a hobby that keeps you busy and provides exercise. The hobby often becomes a passion for one particular product, but participating in the farmers' market itself may also become a hobby. Passion for products, finding their niche and profits often leads to changes in what vendors sell over time. Most vendors started out selling excess from their own garden. As profits become more important and time is invested, most vendors evaluate what products sell and they try new things. They expand their garden and if something becomes too time consuming and not worth the money they make from it, they stop producing it and find another product. Usually they try to find a product that not many other people sell. This helps them to be different from other vendors and attract customers. Vendors are proud of their products when they are unique and when they are popular with consumers. My findings show that the Missoula farmers' market facilitates product development (e.g., experimenting with new products) and diversification for vendors, which often increases the importance of profit. As the economic becomes more important, vendors seem to become more competitive and less cooperative. There is an apparent connection between social motivations and cooperation among vendors. There also seems to be a connection between economic motivations and competition among vendors.

My study suggests that when vendors' motivations are largely social there is a great deal of cooperation among vendors. However, once vendors begin to make more profits and expand their businesses, the economic seems to become more important, and a sense of competition often emerges. The growth of the number of vendors participating in the market also plays a role in the emergence of competition. As more vendors participate there are more vendors who sell the same products. Thus, instrumentalism begins to play a role and the vendor distinguishes his or her products as being of better quality than others. As vendors attempt to attract customers, they try to be different from other vendors by growing products that not many other vendors sell.

Thus, my study suggests the Missoula farmers' market exhibits tensions as a market based on both social and economic orientation. As vendors use the market to facilitate business expansion, the importance of social relations with other vendors may decrease. Although this is not true among all vendors I interviewed, some who established large farm businesses expressed to me the importance of relating to the customers and spending time talking with them; however, for some maintaining social relationships with other vendors was not of great importance. Thus, even though vendors' motivations may be largely economic their behavior toward customers does not appear to change. Social connection is important in attracting and keeping customers and increases the probability that the customer will return. Thus, the farmers' market for the customer remains an alternative market focused on social connection even when the vendor has economic motivations for participating. However, the social connections among vendors change when vendors' motivations are economic and competition increases. This implies that vendors become increasingly isolated from social connection

with other vendors as economic motivations become more important than social motivations for participation. This finding exemplifies Hinrichs' (2000) insight that marketness and instrumentalism color and complicate social embeddedness. The literature on local food systems claim they are a powerful catalyst for developing social capital (Lyson and Green 1999). Hinrichs (2000, 295) also points out that "activists and academic analysts often assume that trust and social connection characterize direct agricultural markets distinguishing local food systems from the global food system" and that it is important to "recognize how social embeddedness is qualified by marketness and instrumentalism." My findings show that although social connections may thrive between customers and vendors at the farmers' market; there are limited social connections among vendors. Thus, farmers' markets may be a place of social connection and trust between customers and vendors; however this is not the case among vendors. Is it inevitable that all vendors will eventually come to value the economic if their business expands? Would this have implications for the farmers' market as an alternative market characterized less by social connection? Among whom will the social connection that characterizes local farmers' markets be largely about? Should we care if the social connection only exists between producers and consumers?

Ethnic Tensions among Vendors

As discussed in the previous chapter, a factor affecting social relationships is a growing sense of ethnic tension among vendors at the market. I found that many of the Caucasian vendors I interviewed have perceptions of Hmong vendors at the market that

create an ethnic tension, which has contributed to the changing social dynamics among vendors.

The work of Amos Hawley (1950) suggests that competitive relationships exist among undifferentiated units making similar demands on an environment. According to this view, vendors at the market who sell the same products would be making similar demands on the environment of the market. The work of Donald Noel (1985) links this concept to race and ethnicity. Noel suggests that ethnocentrism, in addition to competition among undifferentiated units, can lead competition to be channeled along ethnic lines. A characteristic of ethnocentrism is the concept of in-group and out-group. Noel (1985, 110) explains that:

Values of the in-group are equated with universal standards of morality and the practices of the in-group are exalted as better or more natural than those of any out-group... an inevitable consequence of ethnocentrism is the rejection or downgrading of all out-groups to a greater or lesser degree as a function of the extent to which they differ from the in-group... ethnocentrism is expressed in a variety of ways including mythology, condescension, and a double standard of morality in social relations.

Although not all competition is channeled along ethnic lines, my findings reveal a degree of ethnocentrism among some of the vendors I interviewed at the market.

For example, one Caucasian vendor attributed all the changes at the market to the growth of the Hmong community and their percent of vendors at the market. His largest concern was his perception that as a Caucasian vendor, he is competing against the whole Hmong community. Although Hmong farmers are numerous at the market, a few Caucasian vendors I interviewed referred to the Hmong as “those who are taking over the market.” There are many different Hmong vendors whom are not related, many who do not farm together and who sell different products at the market.

There are Hmong vendors who began selling at the market within the past ten years; however, the Hmong vendors are not the only group of farmers contributing to the growth of the market in terms of numbers of vendors. The market master estimated that the proportion of vendors at the farmers' market is sixty percent Caucasian and forty percent Hmong. In estimating the proportion of vendors by ethnicity, he included the Russian vendors as part of the Caucasian percentage, although he told me the number of Russian vendors is very small. The market master perceives that this proportion of vendors has remained constant over the past ten years. As the number of overall vendors participating in the market has increased, the proportion of Caucasian and Hmong vendors remains the same. Thus, the perception that the Hmong vendors have caused most of the growth changes at the market in the past ten years appears to be incorrect.

Hmong vendors may bring a large volume of produce to sell at the market, and some Caucasian vendors do as well. It seems that the negative feelings from some white vendors about Hmong vendors are because the latter often farm collectively. Some white vendors have the perception that the Hmong sell products at their tables that they did not grow in their own personal garden. Although a farmer may not own the land he or she farms, what is the harm in sharing land and farming with family and/or friends? There seems to be an assumption that all the Hmong are one family unit—that all the farming occurs on the same farm and they all share the profits. While making this assumption, some Caucasian vendors apparently conclude that the community of Hmong vendors is almost like a conspiracy against the other vendors at the market.

The ethnocentric feelings among some Caucasian vendors toward Hmong vendors are also reciprocated. One Hmong vendor told me that the Hmong perceive that

Caucasian vendors do not work as hard as Hmong vendors and therefore they do not bring as much produce to the market and they do not sell as much.

Rumors about Hmong vendors have stemmed from some Caucasian vendors' perceptions about the way Hmong vendors farm and their conformity to the rules of the market. Such negative perceptions and the spreading of rumors have serious implications for the types of social relationships that can be created among vendors at the market. One such limiting perception is that many Caucasian vendors assume the Hmong and Russian vendors do not speak English. A few Caucasian vendors commented that Hmong and Russian vendors have lost sales because of a language barrier. Charlie thought it was sad that because the Hmong and Russian vendors cannot connect with people. I found that many white vendors assume that the Hmong or Russian vendors do not know English and therefore do not attempt to interact with them. As noted previously, there is little friendly social interaction between Hmong and Caucasian vendors at the market. And although there is a language barrier, most Hmong know enough English to carry on a general conversation. The perception of a language barrier directly limits social relationships among vendors. Charlie said, "there is a definite culture gap" but he wishes the board would take initiative to promote integration. I wonder how the board could promote such integration. Also is this task the responsibility of the board, or some other group? Possibly as a way to defend the fact that he makes no attempt to interact with Hmong vendors, Charlie says, "the Hmong are pretty much in their own world." This explanation is common among many Caucasian vendors I interviewed.

Market Rules and Regulations

The vendors I interviewed identified various concerns with the current administration and rules of the farmers' market. It appears that this exacerbates the above tensions between ethnic groups as well as the differences between different types of vendors and those with different orientations to the market. I suggest this finding directly relates to the growth of the market and tensions experienced as it transitions from a small informal to a larger formal market governed by rules and procedures.

Rules and regulations are in place for several reasons. The City of Missoula blocks off the street to allow the farmers' market to exist. Thus, the city imposes time limitations on the market. This requires the vendors to adhere to the limitations of the transaction period. Another reason for the rules of the market is to maintain organization, which is especially important as the market grows. For example, the vendors are required to set up tables in measured spaces assigned by the market master. This ensures that the limited space available will be used efficiently. The final reason I believe rules exist is to limit growth of the market and preserve the market as it was intended by its founders: as a local produce market.

Although there have always been rules at the Missoula farmers' market ostensibly to promote a smoothly managed market, the growth of the market and differentiation of vendors have led to a need for the rules to become more widespread and specific. Many vendors expressed concern about the rules being too restrictive. The two issues of most concern were the selling time being too short and the restrictions of what products can be sold are too limited. Vendors were also concerned about the way the rules are enforced.

The enforcement of rules is a difficult endeavor, especially enforcing rules for over one hundred different vendors. Many vendors are probably oblivious that they are breaking rules, such as an umbrella hanging over the space limit. Lines are difficult to draw and tend to become very firm when consistent. Without first-hand knowledge, I cannot speculate about accusations of unfairness and confrontational rule enforcement raised by several vendors. I can only acknowledge that these perceptions exist. Many vendors told me they sense ambiguity in the rules and their enforcement which creates tension and animosity between the administration and the vendors.

The rise in rules and bureaucratic structure of the administration may suggest the formalization of the market and a shift away from the more social character of small farmers' markets. However, the formalization of rules and the bureaucratic structure may have developed as a way to restrict growth and preserve the local and social characteristics of the farmers' market. It seems there are two dynamics here. As organizations grow there is a need to formalize rules for efficiency and order. As the market has grown, rules have become formalized to promote efficiency and order. At the same time however, the process appears to be reinforced as a way to restrict growth.

Building Social Relationships among Vendors

I have found that the social relationships among vendors at the market are often affected by the length of time the vendor has been selling at the market, the degree of marketness, the growth of the market, the formalization of rules, and ethnic differences.

In some cases the social relationships among vendors at the farmers' market are limited by these factors.

The length of time a vendor has been selling at the market in combination with ethnic differences may greatly limit the development of social ties. As one old-timer perceives the problems of growth and changes in the market to be newcomers that he identifies as the group of Hmong, he isolates himself from the newcomers, as he does not see them as an important resource for the market community. The tension between old-timer and newcomer exhibits an absence of social capital where there is little trust and even fewer interactions. The old-timer did not trust the harvesting techniques, or the growing practices of the newcomers. Flora and Flora (1996) identify that such relationships between newcomers and old-timers are characterized by isolation and little trust.

For some vendors, it appears there is a relationship between social connections and the length of their involvement and size of their business. In some cases, the longer the vendor has been involved the larger their business, the greater degree of economic orientation. In this case these factors would limit the social relationships among this type of vendor. These factors may restrict social relationships among vendors and diminish the capacity of the farmers' market as an avenue of social action for vendors.

In contrast, it appears that some vendors who have been selling at the market for a short period of time have smaller businesses and have a greater degree of social orientation within the market. In this case these factors would promote the creation of social relationships. However, some social connections between the same types of vendors may remain the same regardless of these factors. In some cases vendors may

have become involved at the farmers' market to start a business, or they may have had an established business prior to becoming involved at the farmers' market. These vendors' views of the market may not be governed solely by economic orientation. I have found that vendors with economic orientations can also be dedicated to the local and social philosophy of the farmers' market as part of a local food system.

Although ethnic differences in some cases may restrict social relationships between ethnic groups, they may in many cases preserve social relationships within ethnic groups and override the other factors I have identified as possible limitations to social relationships.

Local food systems, including farmers' markets, provide a context for recurring social interaction, and for those seeking alternatives to global food networks, farmers markets ideally should build trust, expand social networks, and promote democracy and community well-being. However, in the case of the Missoula farmers' market, I found that although the context is present, recurring social interaction inside and outside the market is not happening among all types of vendors. Some vendors do interact, and social networks are strengthened in that vendors discuss their products, crop failure, or even help out their neighbor from time to time. However, social networks are largely built within ethnic groups, and many vendors claimed they neither have time nor desire to expand even these networks. Very few social networks are built between vendors of different ethnicities, and few vendors build relationships that extend beyond the farmers' market and lead to social action.

I found that many vendors have the same feelings about various issues regarding the farmers' market. However, they often do not talk to each other about these issues. If

these issues were discussed by the vendors, they could collectively address change.

Without social connection and communication, however, vendors are not aware that other vendors feel the same way. This is not the case for all vendors, however only one vendor told me he had a problem and approached other vendors to inquire about their experience with the same problem. Thus, with a general lack of social connection, there is not a lot of trust among some types of vendors at the market, preventing I would argue the development of social capital among vendors in general.

Future Questions

I had anticipated finding the farmers' market to be a place where vendors build social relationships that create an avenue for further social action. However, my findings show that there is limited social interaction and a significant degree of ethnic tension, and these limit the role of the market for developing social ties and action.

This finding raises many questions about the future of the market. How will the changes occurring within the market affect the future of Missoula's farmers' market? How can these changes be shaped to preserve the farmers' market as a viable alternative local market? How can growth be limited to preserve the social connection that is such a vital characteristic of the alternativeness of the farmers' market? And should growth be limited? Who decides? The social atmosphere has changed greatly and with continued growth of the market, the social aspect at least among vendors appears likely become less important.

This thesis has examined the possibility of farmers' markets as an alternative local food system and the benefits for social relationships and the local economy. I refer to the alternativeness of local food systems as a place where consumers can have face-to-face connections with the producer of their food and buy food that was locally grown. I do not suggest that the farmers' market can be an alternative that challenges supermarkets or that consumers might discontinue shopping at supermarkets. The Missoula farmers' market is seasonal and is a place where consumers can supplement some of what they buy at the grocery store with fresh local produce. I emphasized the non-economic benefits of a local food system; that is the social connection between producer and consumer, and the farmers' market as an arena for building social connections.

As the social dynamics change in the face of competition and economic importance, where does that leave the farmers' market as an alternative market? Can we identify for whom this social connection is important? Some vendors have shown that although economic motivations may increase, the social connection with the customer remains important while social interaction with other vendors becomes less important. So why is it important to preserve social connections among vendors at the market? The Missoula farmers' market has become a valued institution in the community, yet many of the vendors do not even get along. How can we make the farmers' market a better place for vendors to build social networks? Many vendors I interviewed said that they were too busy during the market to socialize with other vendors and that they do not know many of the other vendors. One vendor suggested the board initiate integration between ethnic groups, and maybe they should. I asked a few vendors what they would think about a social gathering at the end of the season for the

vendors. A gathering held at the familiar downtown location of the market where vendors could bring refreshments and have an opportunity to socialize without being busy selling their produce. All but one vendor I asked about this idea thought it was a great idea, and they said they would surely attend if it were organized. It appears that if vendors had the opportunity to get to know one another, the Missoula farmers' market could become a place for vendors to build social ties and enjoy greater social interaction.

There are processes of growth occurring at the Missoula farmers' market which work against the alternativeness of the farmers' market with the introduction of formalized rules and business expansion. However, my findings show that there is a place at the farmers' market for some vendors who want to emphasize and maintain social orientations. There is also a place within the farmers' market for vendors to focus on economic motivations and business growth. Some vendors focus on only the social, some focus on only the economic, but for the majority of the vendors I interviewed there is a balance between the social and the economic.

The future of the Missoula farmers' market is also influenced by the administration of the market. Some of the vendors interviewed raised questions about the current structure of the management and authority. The board selects new members of the board, there is no election process. Therefore, neither the vendors nor the customers have a say in who will represent them on the board. The literature claims local food systems have been identified as a way to democratize and empower communities (Lacy 2000); and as a way to strengthen community identity (Lyson 2001) by aiming to enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community (Feenstra 1997). It is difficult for a local food system to enhance social equity and democracy for the

community when there is no opportunity for open elections. This year the only public meeting was cancelled preventing vendors from publicly discussing their opinions. Comment cards were issued to vendors; however, this eliminated vendors from hearing other vendors' concerns as well as the board's response to their concerns. Vendors also claim that when there were public board meetings and vendors would express concerns or suggestions regarding change, the board would listen but not take action representing vendors' concerns or suggestions.

Social solidarity among vendors is fractured on many levels. It appears that there is a need for those involved to be able to have their voices heard. In the true essence of a local food system, a farmers' market should promote democracy and social equity among participant farmers and community consumers. These qualities of a local food system are part of what qualifies it as an alternative to the global food system. The farmers' market has become an institution in the community; however, structural processes appear to have prevented the vendors involved from getting along. If the structure of authority and the process of change were to open up it could help to reduce the fractured solidarity among vendors. It may not solve all the problems. However it would eliminate a tension that exacerbates current differences.

The administrative structure of the market was not the object of this study, and these latter conclusions reflect the comments of vendors I interviewed. Although it is hard to generalize, there are important deep-seeded issues. Vendors need to be able to voice their concerns and have their concerns be taken seriously. Vendors also need to be able to get to know one another.

One of the values of a local food system is that it is democratic and involves the community, including vendors, customers and the public at large. This study has shown that many of the disputes between vendors are exacerbated by the current administrative structure. It appears that there is a need for greater communication between vendors and the board, as well as among vendors. Communication could be a way to nurture democracy.

In sum, the Missoula farmers' market began its thirty second season this year. While this study has shown some degree of conflict and discontent among vendors, this issue appears to be yet another growing pain of a widely successful local market. Hopefully some of the observations and recommendations noted here can begin to nurture this successful local market further.

APPENDIX ONE

MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET RULES AND REGULATIONS-2002

The following regulations are in compliance with the City Ordinance 8.20 #8789 Resolution #5176, the Management Agreement between the City and the Missoula Farmers' Market, Missoula City-County Health Department, and the bylaws of the Missoula Farmers' Market.

MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET REGULATIONS - 2002

The Missoula Farmers' Market is a **PRODUCE MARKET**. The Market Board has authority over what may be sold at the Market, and it reserves the right to inspect the source of the produce. Changes for 2002 are in **bold type**.

- 1. MARKET TIME:** Saturdays 9 AM to noon May 11 through Oct. 19
Tuesdays 6:00-7:30 PM July 9 through Aug. 27

No transactions are allowed before the opening bell or after the closing bell. Failure to obey will result in a violation notice. On Saturdays a warning bell will ring at 11:50a.m. and the final bell at 12:00. On Tuesdays the warning bell will ring at 7:20p.m. and the final bell at 7:30p.m.. A transaction in progress at the time of the closing bell may be completed.

- 2. ITEMS FOR SALE:** Under Market Authority and the Missoula City Ordinance, items must be grown or gathered by the vendor in Western Montana.

- a. **PRODUCE:** fresh vegetables & herbs, fresh or dried fruits.
No frozen or previously frozen fruits or vegetables. All produce must be sold off tables, truck beds or tailgates. Additional produce must be in boxes or baskets.
- b. **MISCELLANEOUS:** flowers, plants, eggs, honey, bread, home-made jams and jellies in vacuum-sealed jars. Eggs must be candled, graded, packed in cartons and kept at 50 degrees F. or cooler. Flowers & plants may not be sold in decorated pots or vases. Commercial bakeries may sell a variety of baked goods, subject to Health Dept. directives. All bakeries & caterers must supply the Market Master with the photocopy of their license & must display another on their stands.
- c. **SUPPLEMENTAL FARM PRODUCE:** non-edible items possessing some longevity, decorative and/or functional value, must be grown or collected by the vendor & left in a natural state: i.e., no dyes, paints, or purchased decoration, & a minimum of string, wire, staples, thread or glue.
- d. **PROCESSED FOODS:** vinegars, pickles, pesto, salsa, dressings, etc. are not allowed. Apple cider from inspected orchards is allowed. Cider sellers must show proof of inspection.

- 3. PARKING:** *On Saturday the first row of the parking lot, next to the sidewalk on Alder Street, is reserved parking for customers. Vendors may use this space for loading and unloading until 8:30. All vendors cars and/or trucks must display a Missoula Farmers Market sticker on the inside of the front windshield. Marketmaster has these stickers for your use. To increase badly needed customer parking, vendors are asked to use other parking areas away from the adjacent parking lot. On Tuesday evenings Alder Street will be reserved for customer parking.*

- 4. SET-UP:** unless you have reserved space, consult Market Master about where to set up. Sellers may drive vehicles into the Marketplace to unload until 8:15 AM Saturday and 5:30 PM Tuesday, but must move them out as soon as possible. No vehicles are allowed in after these times. Reserved spaces are held only until 8 AM Saturday. Tuesday evening markets have no reserved spaces. No setting up before 7 AM Saturday, 5 PM Tuesday. No bagging, setting aside or selling before opening bell. The Market Master has the last word in disputes over space. Reserved space holders should notify the Market Master in advance if they plan not to occupy their space on a given market day. If the space is not used for a season, the seller will lose it and will have to reapply, except in cases of natural disaster or illness.

5. **SPACE defined:** sellers should keep within 9 ft from the curb. One reserved space is 6 ft wide. Reserved spaces may not be sold or transferred to another party.
6. **FIRE LANES:** must be kept open at all times.
7. **ANIMALS:** no pets, leashed or unleashed, except service animals, are allowed in the Market Place.
8. **IDENTIFICATION:** *all sellers must display their name, address &/or telephone number in one inch letters on poster board or equivalent, visible and acceptable to the Market Master. Signs must be displayed within the seller's space. All mushrooms, huckleberries, cider & eggs sold must bear identity information of the vendors on bags, bottles or cartons. Failure to properly identify your table and items needing further identification will result in a violation notice.*
9. **FEES:** Market Master determines fees, based on linear footage of frontage of the space occupied. Vendors should be at their space from 8:00AM on Saturday and 5:30 PM on Tuesday because the collection begins at that time. Fee schedule for cars and trucks are given below. Sellers are to remain for the entire market period unless MM gives permission to leave after fee payment.
10. **CLEAN MARKET PLACE:** sellers are responsible for keeping & leaving their area clean. Market provides broom & dustpan. To reduce litter, please provide a receptacle for trash generated at your stand.
11. **TAKE-DOWN:** Market Square *must be vacated within 45 minutes of closing bell. Streets should be open to traffic by 12:45 PM Sat., 8:15 PM Tues.*

These regulations are enforced to promote the welfare & safety of sellers and shoppers alike. If notified of an infraction by the Market Master, sellers must correct it. Disregard of these rules will lead to expulsion from the Market. Appeals of any Market violation notice may be made in writing to the Farmers' Market Board.

DISREGARD OF MARKET RULES:

- A. Market Master will issue a violation notice;*
- B. A second notice will result in exclusion from the following Saturday market.*
- C. A third notice will result in exclusion from the Market for the rest of the season.*
- D. Violation notices are cumulative from year to year. A fourth notice will result in permanent exclusion from the Market.*

Appeals for reinstatement may be made in writing to the Farmers' Market Board of Directors.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: call Mel Parker, Market Master-777-2636

Fee Schedule for Unreserved Spaces 2002

- ***Minimum of \$5.00 for table less than 6 ft wide.**
- ***\$1.00 per foot up to 6 feet frontage, totalling to \$6.00.**
- ***\$1.50 per foot up to 12 feet frontage, totalling to \$18.00.**
- ***\$2.00 per foot up to 18 feet frontage, maximum allowed, totalling to \$36.00.**
- ***For car or pickup: \$40.00.**
- ***for car or pickup with extra tables: \$50.00**

APPENDIX TWO
GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you first become involved in the farmers' market?
2. How many years have you been involved?
3. What do you sell?
4. What are the primary reasons you return every year?
5. What are some of the things you enjoy about the farmers' market?
6. Do you know the vendors that have their tables next to you?
7. How often do you interact with other vendors at the farmers' market?
8. What vendors do you interact with? And what do they sell?
9. Do you spend time with vendors outside the farmers' market? How often? What do you do?
10. Do you attend farmers' market board meetings? Why or why not? Do you ever discuss with other vendors issues to bring up at board meetings?
11. How has the market changed since you have been participating at the market?
12. Are you involved with any organizations outside of the farmers' market? How are you involved? How did you become involved? Do any other vendors participate with you? Would you like them to?
13. Are there any changes you would like to see at the farmers' market?

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