RED, BLUE, OR PURPLE PRODUCE?

EXPLORING LIBERALISM, CONSERVATISM, AND THE POLITICS OF MIDWEST FARMERS' MARKET PARTICIPANTS

by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Really? Conservatives like farmers' markets?" This was one of the most common responses I heard when telling friends, colleagues, or strangers about my research on what motivates people from different political positions to participate in farmers' markets. The summer I did my field work for this project I was also working at Troy Community Farm in Madison, WI, a 5 acre urban vegetable farm that sold part of its produce at a neighborhood farmers' market. Most of the people I worked with were liberal or left-leaning politically, and I remember very vividly one day giving my research "elevator speech" to a fellow worker while we methodically plodded through the muddy rows, hunched over, rhythmically picking beans. When I told her I talked to several conservatives who supported farmers' markets and were very concerned about the environmental impacts of farming and the dominance of large agri-business corporations, she stopped dead in her tracks, stood up, turned around and looked at me with wide eyes in complete disbelief. Another common response was to laugh because my conversant thought I was joking. On one occasion, just before I started field work, I was talking to a graduate student who became rather intrigued when I said my research was about the politics of the farmers' market. When I told him, however, that I was planning to interview conservatives at various Midwest farmers' markets he chuckled, assuming I was being facetious because I wouldn't find anyone to interview. Then he started to verbally craft a derisively absurd imaginary market, something akin to conservatives in business

suits sitting behind booths full of butternut squash and fresh picked flowers; he was grinning sardonically the whole time until he realized I wasn't smiling and I was serious about my research project.

These kinds of exchanges confirmed my sense of how much confusion there was among people about who was at farmers' markets and why, especially when it came to motivations of both liberals and conservatives. I myself tend to agree more with liberal and leftist positions so my aim is not to simply critique those positions or be an apologist for conservatives. I also find myself vacillating between a radical vision of change and a moderate vision of political discourse. In other words, I think our food system does need to be revolutionized, but I am troubled by the use of polemical discourse by those on the left and the right. Ultimately, I believe that better understanding of the motivations of participants, no matter their political persuasions, is important if the farmers' market is to be part of a broad movement to influence the politics of food and farming in the United States and to significantly transform the agri-food system for the better.

Academics, public intellectuals, activists, and even some policy makers are increasingly calling for an alternative food system that is more environmentally sustainable and builds healthier, happier communities. Sociologist Thomas Lyson describes this new system as "civic agriculture" vs. "conventional agriculture", which is dominated by global corporations and exploits farmers, consumers, communities, and the environment.[1] Those who support this new system often consider the

[1] Thomas Lyson. *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press, 2004.

farmers' market to be a key part, and even a symbol or model for the system itself. David Korten, an economist and public intellectual, argued the farmers' market is the best example for a sustainable economy that moves beyond the failed dichotomy of capitalism vs. communism.[2] Bill McKibben, one of the more influential environmental writers in America, also touts the farmers' market as a cornerstone of not just a new food system but also a radically new way of organizing economies and societies.[3] To demonstrate the importance and potential of farmers' markets he cites their massive growth in the last few decades, from 340 in 1970 to 1,700 in 1994 and nearly twice that amount ten years later in 2004 at 3,700.[4] By USDA estimates there were over 7,100 in 2011.[5]

Farmers' markets, however, are not without their critics. Academics and non-academics alike ask whether they serve as a universal model for a new way forward or simply as a boutique effort for a specific niche of society. Furthermore, critics often claim that the niche of people participating in farmers' markets is largely middle or upper income and white. Therefore, the farmers' market in particular and the alternative food and agriculture movement as a whole exclude minority racial groups and lower income people. The broader claim is that farmers' markets, at least

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[2] Democracy Now. "David Korten: 'Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth'", last modified Jan 2009. http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/26/david_korten_agenda_for_a_new

[3] Bill McKibben. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007.

[4] McKibben, *Deep Economy*, 84.

[5] USDA. "Farmers' Market Growth: 1994-2011." Last modified Aug. 8th, 2011. http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateS&navID=WholesaleandFarmersMarkets&leftNav=WholesaleandFarmersMarkets&page=Wfarmers'marketFarmersMarketGrowth&description=Farmers%20Market%20Growth&acct=frmrdirmkt

in their present form, are a bourgeois fad with no real power to transform the food system.

While these critics ask important questions about the equity and inclusiveness of participants at farmers' markets, they may be overlooking an important category of diversity: political identity. There is a sense among most of the general public that farmers' markets and the alternative food movement more broadly are supported by people who are left of center politically. There also tends to be a similar bias among activists, supporters, and academics. Some academics, whose work I'll discuss below, do recognize conservative support and participation, but they promptly ridicule and denounce those conservatives.

In the popular press there is growing awareness of conservative participation in alternatives without, necessarily, immediate dismissal. Prominent journalists Michael Pollan and Rod Dreher have brought public attention to the political dynamics of individual participants in farmers' markets and the alternative food movement. They generally describe the dynamic in terms of conflict and tension, but the underlying message is more hopeful that the food movement can be a bridge across political divides. In his book *Omnivore's Dilemma,* Pollan briefly explores the conflict in an interview with farmer Joel Salatin. Salatin describes himself as a "Christian-conservative-libertarian-environmentalist-lunatic farmer",[6] an apt description given his anti-government, anti-corporate, evangelical Christian views and fervent advocacy for a local and sustainable food system. Pollan reflects on

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[6] Michael Pollan. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, ,2006, 125.

Salatin's views, where liberal is conflated with urban and conservative is conflated with rural:

> I realized with a bit of a jolt that his pastoral, or agrarian, outlook doesn't adequately deal with the fact that so many of us now live in big cities far removed from the places where our food is grown and from opportunities for relationship marketing. When I asked how a place like New York City fit into his vision of a local food economy he startled me with his answer: "Why do we have to have a New York City? What good is it?" If there was a dark side to Joel's vision of the postindustrial food chain, I realized, it was the deep antipathy to cities that has so often shadowed rural populism in this country.[7]

Pollan uses another anecdote to show the antipathy goes both ways, with religion as the medium for political conflict:

> I once encouraged a food writer from a big city newspaper to pay a visit to Polyface [Salatin's farm]. The day she got back she telephoned me, all in a lather about the alien beings she'd had to spend the day with in Swoope: "*You never warned me he had a Jesus fish on his front door!*"[8]

Both of these narratives reveal that common political and cultural stereotypes and tensions often become obstacles to creating a broader coalition of people engaging in an alternative food system. Conservative writer Rod Dreher describes similar tensions in his book *Crunchy Cons*:

> A few summers ago, in the National Review office on the east side of Manhattan, I told my editor that I was leaving work early so I could pick up my family's weekly delivery of fruits and vegetables from the neighborhood organic food co-op to which we belonged. "Ewww, that's so lefty," she said, and made the kind of face I'd have expected if I'd informed her I was headed off to hear Peter, Paul, and Mary warble at a fund-raiser for cross-dressing El Salvadoran hemp farmers. Lefty? Moi? But on the subway home, I do admit she was right. A taste for organic vegetables is a left-wing cliché, and here I was, a writer for the premier conservative political magazine in the country, leaving my post on the front lines to consort with the liberals in my neighborhood as I filled my rucksack with the most beautiful and delicious

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[7] Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, 245-246.
[8] Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemm*, 245-246

broccoli, carrots, greens, and what-not in the city. What's up with that?[9] While Dreher is highlighting the political divide regarding the alternative food movement, he describes how what's seen as an exclusively liberal phenomenon is actually highly compatible with core conservative principles: "even though [my wife and I] were conservative Republicans, this stuff made sense, and it didn't conflict with our moral or religious beliefs; in fact, *it flowed naturally from them*."[10] Furthermore, Dreher describes how some conservatives, like farmer Robert Hutchins, are realizing the common ground they have with liberals regarding food and agriculture. Hutchins grew up in rural Texas, spent five years in the Navy, worked for a defense contractor before beginning his farm, listens to Rush Limbaugh, and votes Republican, but he has major problems with Republican policies on food and agriculture. Hutchins has encountered skepticism of organic and local food systems from many mainstream conservatives, but "finds understanding across the religious and philosophical within the organic farming community" including with committed liberals.[11] Pollan also sees glimmers of hope in his interview with Salatin:

> Though when I pressed him, pointing out that New York City, den of pestilence and iniquity though it might be, was probably here to stay and would need to eat, he allowed that farmers' markets and CSAs [community supported agriculture] . . . . might be a good way for urbanites to connect with distant farmers. For my own part, this taut little exchange made me appreciate what a deep gulf of culture and experience separates me from Joel

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[9] Rod Dreher. *Crunchy Cons: How Birkenstocked Burkeans, Gun-Loving Organic Gardeners, Evangelical Free-Range Farmers, Hip Homeschooling Mamas, Rightwing Nature Lovers, and Their Diverse Tribe of Countercultural Conservatives Plan to Save America (or at Least the Republican Party).* New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 4.
[10] Dreher, *Crunchy Cons,* 8-9.
[11] Dreher, *Crunchy Cons,* 70-71.

> – and yet at the same time, what a sturdy bridge caring about food can sometimes provide.

Despite the recognition by well-known writers like Dreher and Pollan of these fascinating political connections, there is little academic research or analysis of these dynamics. Making a politically conservative argument in favor of alternative food initiatives was still novel in 2011, evidenced by articles in the popular press such as "A Conservative Case for Farmers' Markets" written by Danielle Crittendon in the liberal-leaning Huffington Post. She echoes Dreher's acknowledgement of stereotypes, saying "The minute you purchase an organic apple, you are suddenly lumped among NPR-listening, *NYT*'s crossword-puzzle-doing, out-of-touch-with-the-common-man liberals."[12] This paucity of research into the political positions and negotiations of farmers' market participants leaves academics with an incomplete understanding of who is actually participating in farmers' markets, why they participate, and what potential the farmers' markets hold for broader participation and their role in transforming the food system. In response, the key questions that motivate this study are: why do liberals and conservatives both buy and sell at farmers' markets? Are there deeply held values or ways of thinking that are shared across the political divide? Given the presence of liberals and conservatives and a socially engaging atmosphere, does the farmers' market serve as a kind of democratic space or a forum for deliberative democracy about food, farming, and politics?

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[12] Danielle Crittenden. "A Conservative Case for Farmers' Markets," Huffington Post, March 12 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/danielle-crittenden/farmers-markets_b_834863.html. Accessed August 1st 2011.

While I will be focusing on the mindsets of specific individuals at specific markets, I will aim to always keep the dynamics of the broader agri-food system close at hand. This project is motivated in part by the belief that grass roots political mobilization along with local, state, and federal policy changes are all necessary for transforming the food system. Individual choices such as buying from local farms at markets or maintaining a backyard vegetable garden are important and have an impact, but they are not enough. There is not necessarily, however, a strict dichotomy between individual action and wider social or political efforts and the farmers' market is an interesting case for exploring this issue through the perspectives of its participants.

Many critics perceive the farmers' market as a place of mostly individual action where consumers can buy fancy local and organic food. It can be and is in certain cases, however, actually a part of broader efforts and awakenings among both consumers and producers and is connected, albeit in subtle ways, to larger political forces.[13] While farmers' markets can be places of overt electoral politics (I've personally witnessed in both Chicago and Madison during the 2010 election season both volunteers or staffers from the Democratic Party and the Green Party handing out flyers), the political forces I'm talking about are more emergent and inchoate but also less ephemeral than election cycles. I will argue, along with geographers Lewis

[13] Claire C. Hinrichs. "Practice and Place in Remaking the Food System" in *Remaking The North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. Eds. C. Claire Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.

Holloway and Moya Kneafsey[14], that the farmers' market is neither exclusively or overtly a place for liberals or conservatives, progressives or reactionaries. Furthermore, this dynamic is potentially a creative tension rather than clear evidence of the potential for "dangerous coalitions" [15] across political lines.

Nor is it a site of conscious and overt deliberative democracy. Yet, following the work of political scientist Diana Mutz,[16] it is a site of positive social interactions amongst participants from across the political spectrum and these interactions can build important social capital which serve as a foundation for more directed dialogue and potential political action. Contributing to the inchoate political nature of the farmers' market, participants do not necessarily consciously connect their involvement at the farmers' market with politics, but they are clearly motivated to participate by strongly held values which have deep connections with their political opinions or identification (albeit loosely at times) with particular ideologies. And ultimately, of course, political opinions and ideological associations have real material impacts on how people behave within the food system, how they influence others, who they elect to public office, and what policies those political officials pursue.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with Hinrichs, when she provides a broad analysis of the issues at hand:

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[14] Lewis Holloway and Moya Kneafsey. "Reading the Space of the Farmers' Market: A Preliminary Investigation from the UK." *Sociologia Ruralis*. 40.3(2000): 285-299.
[15] Melanie E. DuPuis and David Goodman. "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism." *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21.3(2005): 359-371.
[16] Diana C. Mutz. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative Versus Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

> Having both material presence and symbolic charge, food now figures prominently in struggles for power, negotiations about policy, possibilities for partnership, and new and renewed expressions of pleasure and identity. Consequently, food provides a unique analytical and experiential nexus, drawing together and crystallizing many urgent, complicated problems facing society. No longer taken for granted or viewed in isolation, food can and should be connected to community vitality, cultural survival, economic development, social justice, environmental quality, ecological integrity, and human health.[17]

The challenge for activists and concerned academics and citizens is how to connect food to these values, and how to negotiate the conflicts that arise when pursuing all of these values simultaneously. Given the breadth and depth of the problems with our food system and the increasingly polarized political climate and political gridlock, this process of connection and negotiation will likely require a broad base of engagement and support to succeed. Alternative food initiatives are diverse in form and complex in how they challenge but also maintain certain aspects of the conventional food system. Nevertheless, I believe there are a set of central values or what I'll call "modes of thinking" that animate these initiatives. These modes of thinking are not mutually exclusive and are sometimes in tension with each other. They are as follows:

- Direct democracy and populism, which lead to support for a more regionalized, localized, decentralized political economic system and a food system composed mostly of independent or cooperatively owned small and mid-size farms, processors, and distributors; these modes of thinking can have both exclusionary or inclusive tendencies. Closely connected to these modes is a critique of large agri-business corporations, materialistic values, and economic structures and practices which create inequality.

- Progressivism, which leads to contemporary support for eliminating agricultural subsidies for corporations and wealthy landowners, and support of government programs that support small farmers, emphasize animal

[17] Hinrichs. *Remaking the North American Food System*, 1.

welfare and food safety, and encourage healthy diets full of fresh fruits and vegetables. In part because of progressivism's complex history with liberal and conservative thought, it leads to contemporary ambivalence about the evolving role of government in food and farming.

- Communitarianism is the perspective that individual people are embedded in human relationships which are fundamental for one's identity, health, and happiness. This mode of thinking leads to a belief that eating and growing food together is important as well as understanding who and what's involved in getting food from "farm to fork".

- Environmentalism, which leads to a belief that the environment and human society are inextricably linked and part of a holistic system and therefore there is a focus on organic agriculture, health of land and people.

- Skepticism about the benefits of Modern/Enlightenment science and technology. This skepticism emerges from a mixture of Pre-modern and Postmodern ideas. It leads to an embrace of a kind of science which acknowledges and explores the holistic nature-society system, like ecology. There is often an emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of this system and a belief in the importance of eating whole foods and culturally traditional meal combinations.

Each of these modes of thinking has a complicated history and relationship to food and farming in the Unites States. These descriptions do not capture the enormous complexity of each mode, but they highlight the most pertinent aspects for this project.

Visions and Strategies for Transformation and the Role of Farmers' Markets

There are a number of well-developed suggestions for how to further the alternative food movement. None of these are particularly explicit about how participation and dialogue across the political spectrum would play a role, but they

articulate visions for which cross-partisan and cross-ideology participation would be at least consistent with if not central to realizing the vision.

One approach is presented by Stevenson et. al[18] which emerges from social movement theory. They ask the question whether alternative food initiatives do comprise a social movement, and then argue that they do, but actors need to articulate a clearer intellectual framework that explains food system problems and solutions and a set of actionable strategies to make the movement viable. The frameworks regarding agri-food issues need to be testable and verifiable through research or experience. However, "No matter how objectively important an agrifood issue may be, if it does not resonate with a substantial proportion of the population, it will be difficult to mobilize much change activity."[19] In other words, even if researchers and activists can agree on a food system problem and solution, if they do not communicate well with and engage seriously a broad base of people, change will not occur. Clearly, appealing to liberals and conservatives is relevant here.

The authors articulate what they believe are two viable and interconnected frameworks they call "goal orientations" or broad targets and "strategic orientations" or necessary processes. They describe the goal orientations as inclusion of disadvantaged groups into food initiatives, broad reformation of rules and regulations from retail grocery to labor laws, and systematic transformation. The bulk of their work focuses on strategic orientations. These are divided into

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[18] G.W.Stevenson, et al. "Warrior, Builder and Weaver Work" in *Remaking The North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. C. Claire Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson, eds. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2007.

[19] Stephenson et al., "Warrior, Builder and Weaver Work", 36.

"warrior"," builder", and "weaver" work, but are not mutually exclusive. Warrior work is characterized by resistance to the conventional, corporate dominated food system. It involves actively challenging and resisting political and economic structures as well as wider culture and the perspectives of individuals. It includes protests, but also legislative battles and research, and may focus on issues like farm workers' rights or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Builder work is more entrepreneurial than contentious and is focused on constructing actual food and farming alternatives. It occurs at multiple scales such as individual businesses or farmers markets and local or regional distribution systems. The authors make an important point that many "builders" are not consciously political, which I found to be true of many of the Midwest farmers I interviewed.

Weaver work is the third strategy and is particularly relevant to this project. It involves establishing coalitions among warriors and builders and building conceptual linkages between different but compatible visions and values. There is also a focus on civil society organizations, including non-profit organizations, food policy councils, and university extension programs. The authors acknowledge there are a considerable diversity of visions and values within the food movement or even that there are multiple food movements. While conceptual linkages need to be made between these movements, this diversity can also be a source of strength. They quote rural sociologist Fred Buttel to emphasize this point: "it will only be through coalitions...that this social movement force can achieve the extent of meaningful impacts that are required to address' the fundamental social, political, and economic

issues."[20] Among the groups they mention for coalition building are environmental, labor, anti-globalization, social justice, family farming organizations, and "progressive currents in the public health community."[21] I would argue this collection focuses on groups that are largely left-leaning politically, and I will make the case that efforts should at least be attempted to build coalitions with and amongst conservatives as well.

Neva Hassanein presents "food democracy" as another strategic vision for transforming the food system. The lynchpin of food democracy, and she argues democracy in general, is participation:

> At the core of food democracy is the idea that people can and should be actively participating in shaping the food system, rather than remaining passive spectators on the sidelines. In other words, food democracy is about citizens having the power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.[22]

She cites the example of the Toronto Food Policy Council, which nurtures "food citizenship"[23], engaging community members in issues at multiple scales from the merits of breastfeeding to injustices perpetuated by the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, the organization eschews the traditional charity model of simply giving food to low-income people and it trains them in food growing and business skills to empower them to make them active participants in "food democracy".

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[20] Frederick H. Buttel. "Some observations on Agro-food Change and the Future of Agricultural Sustainability Movements." In *Globalizing Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, eds David Goodman and Michael Watts. New York: Routledge, 1997, 353.
[21] Stephenson et al, "Warrior, Builder and Weaver Work", 54.
[22] Neva Hassanein, "Practicing food democracy: A pragmatic politics of transformation." *Journal of Rural Studies* 19(2003):79.
[23] Hassanein, "Practicing food democracy ", 79.

Like Stephenson et al., Hassanein also sees the diversity within the food movement as a creative tension. The food movement is composed of or linked with "new" social movements like feminism, ecology, and peace, which each bring unique strengths. This diversity allows for mobilization of a diverse base of support from people "who have real or potential grievances with the agro-food system, and their participation in social movements is crucial if meaningful change is going to occur." Furthermore, the diverse constituents within these movements are participating in "social laboratories in which people experiment with new practices, ideas, and organizational principles.... which leads to innovation."[24] Another key element of food democracy is building coalitions with "non-traditional" allies. She discusses an example from her own activism to educate the public about pesticides which brought together "public health advocates, public drinking water providers, commercial fishing organizations, watershed councils, children advocates, and labor unions" among others. This coalition was battling a "Republican and anti-environmental majority"[25] in the state legislature. Lastly, willingness to compromise and a continual cycle of action and reflection are part of the pragmatic politics of food democracy.

Hassanein's approach is insightful because it breaks down the dichotomy of individual action vs. structural change, arguing that these can be flip sides of the same pragmatic, democratic coin. I strongly agree with her focus on building coalitions among "non-traditional" allies, of which dialogue across the political spectrum at or about farmers' markets would be an example. However, it's important

[24] Hassanein, "Practicing food democracy", 81.
[25] Hassanein, "Practicing food democracy", 83.

to note that her argument frames, albeit in a subtle way, conservatives, or at least non-leftists and liberals as outside of the potential food movement coalition. Her initial remarks are framed by the book, *Hunger for Profit*,[26] whose editors say "a left analysis" leads one to believe "the key tactics chosen by activists at the grassroots level are insufficient to mount a systematic critique of corporate agriculture and liberal capitalist economics as a whole."[27] While Hassanein does not explicitly argue that a "left analysis" is the only kind of analysis that addresses structural change, the reader begins to get this impression. Furthermore, the "new" social movements she mentions (feminism, ecology, and peace) are left of center movements, and her campaign for pesticide education is pitted against "Republicans" who are presumably more conservative than not. Finally, the central concept of food democracy is "participatory democracy" which emerged out of the liberal political tradition in the 1960's. She argues that exposure to differing opinions, and dialogue and debate within the "social laboratories" of movements is clearly an example of active participation in politics, which is an argument that may not hold up to closer scrutiny. I will examine these issues further in Chapter 4 in the discussion on deliberative democracy. All of this is to say Hassanein's concept of food democracy holds considerable merit for exploring and understanding the alternative food movement, but reveals a certain bias against or at least an ignorance of the role conservatives play or might play in this movement. In other words, if "food democracy" is fundamentally about the broadest base of individual citizens

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[26] Fred Magdoff, John Bellamy Foster, and Frederick Buttel, eds. *Hungry for Profit:The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.
[27] Hassanein, "Practicing food democracy", 77.

participating in the food system then it should be about encouraging citizens of all political stripes to get involved.

Similarly to Hassanein, the historian Warren Belasco's book *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*[28] narrates the countercultural food movement with liberals or leftists as the protagonists (albeit extremely flawed) and conservatives as the antagonists. Conservatives are portrayed monolithically, with no recognition of disagreement amongst conservatives, and no real sense that conservatives could be part of an "alternative" food system. My goal is not to be critical of Belasco. He has written an authoritative account of the countercultural food movement of the 1960's and 1970's which I draw on considerably in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the corporate, capitalistic, industrialized economic system and correlating food system was ardently defended by the Republican Party throughout the second half of the 20th century and it became enshrined as the best system by the most dominant conservative voices. It was also defended by more centrist liberals. So, it makes a good deal of sense for Belasco to connect the conventional food system with conservative politics. The point here is that certain conservatives throughout the 20th century *were also* radically opposed to the dominant economic system and correlating food system, as I'll demonstrate in Chapter 3. They, however, did not identify or were not a part of the 1960's and 1970's

[28] Warren Belasco. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On The Food Industr.*, 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. This book was originally written in 1989 and then updated for a second edition published in 2006.

New Left movement or the "countercuisine." Thus, they've been largely ignored in treatments of the alternative food movement and its history.

Prior Analysis of Farmers' Market Participant Motivation

Numerous studies have revealed that there are a multitude of motivations among participants. Festing argues that consumers visit farmers' markets mainly for the freshness and quality of fruits and vegetables they find there and for the specific seasonal varieties available. [29] Secondarily, consumers are attracted to the friendly, social, outdoor atmosphere, and opportunities to meet and support local rural farmers. The main reason for farmers to sell at farmers' markets is the higher profit margin they receive. Farmer's garner 80% more income by selling directly to the consumer and removing the middleman, than if they sold through retailer. Furthermore, farmers appreciate the support they receive from their customers and the increased sense of confidence and control over their business that they feel.

By analyzing interviews with farmers from upstate New York, Griffin and Frongillo further describe the economic and social motivations of farmers to sell at farmers' markets. Many of the farmers explained that as small farmers they often have difficulty selling to large retailers and thus the farmers' markets are an important source of income. In addition to the social benefits of enjoyable interactions, the farmers also were motivated by personal values such as "pride in raising and marketing one's own products, working together with other farmer-

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[29] Harriet Festing. *Farmers' Markets: An American Success Story*. Bath, England: Eco-Logic Books, 1998, 33-34.

vendors, and providing customers with honest information."[30] Other studies reveal motivations aside from product quality, increased income, or interpersonal enjoyment. These values are more in line with the theoretical work discussed above including environmental concerns and social justice.[31]

Critiques

For scholars like Stephenson et al, Hassanein, and Gillespie et al, the farmers' market is an important practical and symbolic example of how to create an alternative food system which is richly laden with values like social justice, environmental sustainability, and participatory democracy. This view has been corroborated by their empirical evidence. In contrast to these theorists, other researchers find these values to be more rhetoric than reality. Furthermore, while supporters see farmers' markets as concrete manifestations of a burgeoning alternative, critics see them as mere fads of a capricious consumer society. They argue that at best those basic economic and social needs are really the central motivating forces, and at worst farmers' markets are sites of active discrimination. Geographer Julie Guthman has offered consistent critiques of the alternative food initiatives, arguing they exclude people who are not white and are low income, and reify neoliberalism and thus the core foundations of conventional agriculture. She characterizes the narrative of the movement as follows: if the complex industrial

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[30] Matthew Griffin and Edward Frongillo. "Experiences and perspectives of farmers from Upstate New York farmers' markets." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 20(2003).
[31] See Thomas Lyson, *Civic Agriculture*, and Gilbert Gillespie et al. "Farmers' Markets as Keystones in Rebuilding Local and Regional Food Systems" in *Remaking The North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. C. Claire Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson eds. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2007.

chain that makes food so cheap, from factory farming, to chemical food processing, to pernicious advertising were uncovered, it "would necessarily trigger a desire for local, organic food and people would be willing to pay for it. Then, so the logic goes, the food system would be magically transformed into one that is ecologically sustainable and socially just."[32] Underlying this narrative is a broad assumption about who is being educated here; according to Guthman it is white middle and upper class consumers. The spaces and structures, i.e. farmers' markets and community supported agriculture programs (CSA's) are "coded" as white. She cites statistics on the racial make-up of consumers participating, pointing to the dearth of non-whites. She also does qualitative analysis of interviews with market managers, documenting certain (while admittedly not representative) "chilling" responses such as "Hispanics aren't into fresh, local, and organic products."[33]

Underlying Guthman's critiques is the broader argument that because the alternative food movement is exclusionary, it is not capable of systemic change:

> While I grant that I take my personal eating choices seriously, I see them more as ways to opt out, than a road to change. In other words, I don't harbor the fantasy that individual, yuppified, organic, slow food consumption choices are the vehicles to move toward a more just and ecological way of producing and consuming food.[34]

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[32] Julie Guthman."If They Only Knew": Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions." *Professional Geographer*. 60.3(2008): 387.
[33] Guthman. "If They Only Knew", 393. For similar critiques see Rachel Slocum. "Anti-racist practice and the work of community food organizations. *Antipode* 38.2(2006): 327–49;
Rachel Slocum. "Whiteness, space, and alternative food practice." *Geoforum* 38.3(2007): 520–33;
David Goodman. "Organic and conventional agriculture: Materializing discourse and agro ecological managerialism." *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17.3(2000): 215-219; and Claire Hinrichs. "Embeddedness and local food systems: notes on two types of direct agricultural market." *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16.3(2000), 295-303.
[34] Julie Guthman. "Commentary on teaching food: Why I am fed up with Michael Pollan et al." *Agriculture and Human Values* 24(2007):261–264

In a study of California farmers' markets run by non-profits concerned about social justice and environmental sustainability, Alison Alkon provides a similar but subtler critique by describing the tension between economic values and social and environmental values. The participants she interviewed said they were motivated by ethical reasons:

> farmers' market participants describe their vendors as governed by moral values in contrast to the greedy, industrial agribusiness system motivated only by profit. . . . In addition, many participants characterize local economics as a pragmatic, do-able alternative to failed attempts to reform a government that promotes corporate capitalism, environmental destruction and, in the case of West Oakland, institutionalized racism.[35]

Alkon argues, however, that when these values come in conflict, the economic motivations usually trump values of environmental sustainability and social and racial justice; vendors will ultimately sell in locations and to customers that provide them adequate income.

I do not wish to fully dismiss these critiques about race, class, and the underlying presence of economic self-interest. But again, I believe they are missing an important layer of complexity by ignoring political identity and ideology. Furthermore, in my interviews, I also observed the tension amongst different motivations for participants but found some participants willing to actively and consciously negotiate the tensions, rather than unconsciously abandoning broader social and environmental values for more immediate economic ones.

Political Ideology as Frame: Conservatives and Alternative Food

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[35] Alison Alkon. "From Value to Values: Sustainable Consumption at Urban farmers' markets." *Agriculture and Human Values.* 25(2008):487-498.

While there has been considerable research into the host of motivations and values of farmers' market participants, very little research has seen participation through the specific lens of political identity or ideology. In 1989 environmental psychologist Robert Sommer observed that farmers' markets attract participants from across the political divide and explains briefly why, but with limited explication and no specific evidence:

> Environmental activists link the markets to family farms, land preservation, organic farming, opposition to pollution, and a general antidevelopment, small-is-beautiful philosophy. . . . On the other end of the political spectrum, conservatives have no difficulty in supporting an institution so rooted in individualism, economic exchange, the family farm, and localism.[36]

There has been some more recent acknowledgement of conservative participation in alternative agriculture, but rather limited exploration and analysis. Moreover, participating conservatives are often dismissed as unreflective, reactionary, and ardently neoliberal, or at least motivated primarily by profit.[37] This treatment may also be clouded by historical research on the connection between certain extreme-right ideologies and alternative agriculture, including Nazi organic agriculture initiatives.[38]

Dupuis and Goodman investigate the politics of the alternative food movement through the prism of recent enthusiasm over "local food". While they

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[36] Robert Sommer. "Farmer's Markets as Community Events" in *Public Spaces and Spaces*. Irwin Altman and Ervin H. Zube, eds. New York: Plenum Press 1989, 61.
[37] See Dupuis and Goodman as well as Noel Castree. 'Marxism, Capitalism, and the Production of Nature', in Noel Castree and Bruce Braun, eds., *Social Nature: Theory Practice and Politics*, Oxford: Blackwell 2001.
[38] See Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier. *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995; and Frank Uekoetter. *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006.

offer important insights into how to conceive of local, alternative food politics in a more nuanced way, their appraisal of left-right politics is still somewhat limiting. They seek:

> to understand how to make localism into an effective social movement of resistance to globalism rather than a way for local elites to create protective territories for themselves. We have to move away from the idea that food systems become just by virtue of making them local and toward a conversation about how to make local food systems more just.[39]

They are right to critique the naive belief that simply buying "local food" is a panacea for the problems of the conventional food system. They are also right to warn about the ease with which a simplistic slogan like "local food" can easily be co-opted by established elites to maintain their status. A conversation among academics, activists, and concerned citizens about how to create a more complex idea of the local is indeed in order. Yet, their framing of political work around local food seems to preclude the possibility of productive dialogue across the left-right divide. Offering examples from corollary European initiatives, they observe a

> strange rural compromise forged by the market-based, rural value-added policies of neoliberal governments in both Italy and the UK which, by a stroke of political alchemy, have managed to bring both left and right agendas together around the European rural imaginary. For example, a neoliberal compromise in Italy can be seen in the funding of the Slow Food Movement's recent Terra Madre conference: while the movement itself is led by left-leaning Carlo Petrini, much of the funding came from the neoliberal state and from the right-wing National Alliance.[40]

They may be correct about these specific examples, but their framing portrays any common ground found among the left and right around alternative food as

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[39] Dupuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?", 364.
[40] Dupuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?", 368.

necessarily fodder for a "dangerous political bargain"[41] that unites neoliberal, capitalistic economic agendas and visions of a romantic rural utopia. I believe this conclusion is based on a somewhat simplistic understanding of both liberal and conservative intellectual history, and that it doesn't necessarily reflect the position of farmers' market participants.

Research Methods and Terminology

The method I used for researching these questions was in-depth qualitative interviews with both active farmers and consumers at the markets. A total of 18 interviews were conducted, lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the time constraints of the participants, and the length of their responses. They were conducted in places that were most convenient and comfortable for participants, and as such were held either at the farmers' market or in homes. To identify willing participants I used the snowball method. I started with one or two contacts in each location and they referred me to others. The interviews were done at three sites: the East Side Farmers' Market in Madison, Wisconsin; the Roseau farmers' market in Roseau, Minnesota; and the Alexandria farmers' markets in Alexandria, Minnesota. These markets were chosen for their location in varying political environments, evidenced by recent election data and preliminary conversations with contacts, however, all markets are in the Upper Midwest and relatively small. Following political scientists Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders[42], election data remain

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[41] Dupuis and Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?", 368

[42] Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders. "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of Polarized America." *The Forum*. 3.2(2005):1-21.

important indicators of ideological preference. Voters' preference for the Democratic Party served as a proxy for "liberal" and the Republican Party for "conservative".

In Roseau County, where the town of Roseau is located, the results of the last three elections have shown clear preferences for Republican (R) vs. Democratic (D) candidates[43]:

2008: 58% (R) John McCain	40% (D) Barack Obama
2004: 68% (R) George Bush	31% (D) John Kerry
2000: 66% (R) George Bush	30% (D) Al Gore

In Dane County, where the city of Madison is located, the clear preference has been the opposite[44]:

2008: 26% (R) John McCain	73% (D) Barack Obama
2004: 33% (R) George Bush	66% (D) John Kerry
2000: 33% (R) George Bush	61% (D) Al Gore

This disparity greatly increased the likelihood of finding politically conservative participants at the Roseau farmers' market and politically liberal participants at the Madison farmers' market. These results, however, also indicated a politically heterogeneous population, and I was able to find non-conservatives in Roseau and non-liberals in Madison. There were also differences between sellers and buyers at the markets, depending on whether growers were coming from different counties with very different political leanings.

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[43] Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, "Election Results an Statistics." http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=137 . Accessed May 15th, 2010.
[44] Dane County Clerk's Office, "Election Results". http://www.countyofdane.com/election/results.aspx. Accessed May 15th 2010.

A majority of voters in Douglas County, where Alexandria is located, preferred Republican candidates, but to a significantly lesser degree than voters in Roseau County. Thus, Alexandria represented more of a mixed political environment, and I had no trouble finding both liberal and conservative participants[45]:

2008: 54% (R) John McCain 44% (D) Barack Obama

2004: 58% (R) George Bush 40% (D) John Kerry

2000: 57% (R) George Bush 37% (D) Al Gore

Voting and party preferences are ultimately substantive but insufficient measures of ideology. Thus, following political scientists Shawn Treier and D. Sunshine Hillygus[46], I asked participants a number of questions in which they had to place themselves on a scale of 1 to 7 according to their ideological views. Included in this set, was the straightforward question asking them to label themselves accordingly:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Liberal	Liberal	Slightly Liberal	Moderate	Slightly Conservative	Conservative	Extremely Conservative

When I include quotations below, I will describe people with the label that they attached to themselves based on this scale. I also asked participants a series of questions about issues such as federal spending on welfare programs, gun control, environmental regulation, and gender roles to better understand their perspectives.

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[45] Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, "Election Results an Statistics."
[46] Shawn Treier and D. Sunshine Hillygus. "The Nature of Political Ideology in the Contemporary Electorate." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 73.4(2009): 679-703.

These questions could be somewhat formulaic, so I encouraged them to offer labels, descriptions, or articulations that were outside or different than the proscribed boundaries if they so desired.

Table of interview participants (using self-identified labels)

Roseau	Madison	Alexandria
1. Slightly conservative vendor 2. "Republican" vendor 3. Slightly conservative vendors (husband and wife) 4. Conservative consumers (husband and wife) 5. Slightly liberal/moderate consumer 6. Slightly liberal consumer 7. Conservative vendor 8. Bob Berglund, former Secretary of Agriculture[47]	1. Extremely liberal vendor 2. Extremely liberal consumer (who used to be a vendor) 3. Conservative vendor 4. Conservative vendor	1. Slightly liberal vendor 2. Conservative vendor 3. Extremely liberal consumer 4. Extremely conservative vendor 5. Conservative vendors (husband and wife) 6. Conservative vendor

Up to this point I have been using the terms "conservative" and "liberal" quite loosely. These terms have been a constant source of tension throughout the duration of this project. They are often used by the media, the general public, and even scholars in a way that makes them dichotomously opposed. This dichotomy is highly problematic because these terms have evolved over time, have various meanings attached to them, and do a poor job of capturing the multitude of political

[47] Everyone consented to being interviewed if their identities were kept anonymous, except for Former Secretary Berglund. He wanted me to identify him by name.

perspectives in the United States. Part of the purpose of this project is to disassemble this dichotomy and reveal common "modes of thinking" share by these ideologies. At the same time, liberal and conservative are not so problematic that they become empty signifiers. These terms do hold substantial meaning and significance for the people I spoke with, and they continue to do work in the world. Nearly everyone I interviewed quickly and easily identified themselves according to these labels. So, despite my goal of problematizing these terms, I believe they remain useful.

It's also important here to define what I mean by "ideology". Political scientists and other scholars often define ideology as a predetermined worldview or a fixed set of principles through which one interprets and experiences reality.[48] Adherence to an ideology, therefore, requires a rigid and relatively simplistic intellectual position. This definition of ideology was promulgated by the influential work of social scientists Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset in the 1950's and 60's. Bell's book *The End of Ideology: The Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*[49] was written partly in reaction to the horrors of totalitarian regimes such as German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and Stalinism as well as the decline of Marxism and socialism in American electoral politics. In their view, a political consensus was emerging among intellectuals which held that the current American system, of a republican democracy with a free-market economy buffered by government intervention and social programs, was producing a just society and a high quality of

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[48] Brian Farmer. *American Political Ideologies: An Introduction to the Major Systems of Thought in the 21st Century*. Jefferson. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc 2009.
[49] Daniel Bell. *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2nd edition, 2000.

life for its citizens. This system was not the result of any one particular ideology but rather a pragmatic application of specific policies without any real teleology attached. Ideologies and their rationalistic utopian plans were to be viewed with extreme skepticism.

Bell and Lipset's theory of consensus can easily be critiqued in hindsight for ignoring such realities as lingering poverty and racism in America, but the focus here is on their conception of ideology. Under this conception, the term "ideology" connotes a dangerous and extremely undesirable totalitarian worldview. However, political theorist James Young poses the question: "is the choice really between ideologically motivated extremism and piecemeal adjustment in the absence of an overall vision?"[50] Young makes a compelling argument for a more neutral, less normatively charged definition of ideology. He cites Carl Friedrich's definition of a general ideology as "a system of ideas concerning the existing social order, and at the same time concerning actions to be taken regarding it," and a totalitarian ideology defined as a "total rejection of an existent society and a program of total reconstruction."[51] I believe the former definition is a more useful and accurate description of most political ideologies. Under this definition, it is fair to say liberalism and conservatism are ideologies.

Using a more benign definition of ideology does not mean that certain people who label themselves as liberal or conservative are not prone to rigid thinking or dogmatism. Conversely though, I would argue that being a liberal or conservative

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[50] James P. Young. *Reconsidering American Liberalism: The Troubled Odyssey of the Liberal Idea*. Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1996, 191.
[51] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 191.

does not necessarily mean one ascribes to a simplistic and fixed worldview. Liberals and conservatives who are more intellectually nuanced, in Young's words, understand that "a healthy political system must have some sense of values, some long-range goal that can function as a conception of the public interest, some general idea of welfare"[52]; in other words, a position that avoids both dogmatism and relativism.

I was not attempting in this study to determine the broad make-up or percentages of farmers' market participants according to political identity. I was instead trying to reveal more about the under-analyzed political diversity of farmers' markets and to better understand what motivates individuals to participate, and what common values exist. Therefore, qualitative interviews were most appropriate for accomplishing these goals. I think considerably more empirical research is needed, both qualitative and quantitative, to understand the breadth of political diversity and how political ideology differs in different geographic locations and contexts. I also think action research is needed, where farmers' market participants from across the political spectrum are engaged in some form of deliberative discussions. I will expand on this final point in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion.

All of the key modes of thinking I outlined earlier emerged out of or at least intersected with both liberal and conservative intellectual history. Again, the general public, activists, and agri-food system scholars, however, have tended to see these modes as largely couched within liberal or leftist politics. The general picture is that contemporary liberal or leftist political positions correlate well with alternative food

[52] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 191.

movement goals, and that the conventional food system is supported by conservative political positions. Under this conception then, there is a sharp distinction between alternative and conventional agri-food systems, practices, and politics. Recent scholarly work has begun to problematize this dichotomy, revealing that many "alternatives", including farmers' markets, retain elements of conventional food practices and politics.[53] There has been some acknowledgment that this intermingling of alternative and conventional also reveals tensions and complexity within liberal and leftist politics regarding agri-food systems. There has been limited empirical research, however, into how contemporary participants in alternative food initiatives who explicitly identify themselves with liberal or left of center politics embody or negotiate these tensions. In Chapter 2, I will add to this nascent field of research by showing how the various modes of thinking central to alternative food initiatives are motivating liberals at farmers' markets in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Because it useful for further unpacking this complexity, I will briefly examine the intellectual history of liberal and leftists politics and how they have evolved along with food and agricultural history. My goal here is not to simply rehash the work other scholars have done, but rather to highlight how the historical evolution of the agri-food system and political ideas help explain the perspectives of contemporary people. I will argue that the contemporary tensions within liberal and leftist thought are in part responsible for the "absence of master frames" which

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[53] Damian Maye, Lewis Holloway, and Moya Kneafsey.eds. *Alternative Food Geographies: Representation and Practice.* Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2007.

"hampers our collective efforts to effectively mobilize large numbers of people toward a unifying vision or goal."[54]

Again, some scholars have recognized participation by contemporary conservatives in alternative food initiatives, but these conservatives are quickly dismissed as reactionary, nativist, unreflective, and/or wedded to dogmatic neoliberal agendas. In Chapter 3 I will argue that this dismissal ignores the rich and complex history of conservative thought and how the modes of thinking valorized by agri-food activists and scholars are consistent with certain important conservative ideas and are present among conservatives participating in farmers' markets. Furthermore, my interviews with conservatives reveal they hold a variety of nuanced ideological positions, are often reflective and willing to be self-critical, and in many cases are highly dissatisfied with corporate agri-business, neoliberal, and materialistic values and practices.

By focusing on self-identified liberals in Chapter 2 and then self-identified conservatives in Chapter 3, I recognize I risk reifying the problematic dichotomy that supposedly separates these political perspectives. I have organized the material as such, however, because I believe I have to start with standard stereotypical understandings to show how they are problematic.

In Chapter 4, I will argue that the farmers' market is not a site of overt deliberative democracy but because it is a particularly salient example of the "unique

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[54] Gary W. Stevenson, et al. "Warrior, Builder and Weaver Work" in *Remaking The North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. Eds. C. Claire Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 54.

analytical and experiential nexus"[55] presented by food, it may be a starting point for grassroots, cross-ideology and cross-partisan dialogue about what a more just and environmentally sustainable food system might look like, and how we can get there, especially in the realm of informal and formal political action.

[55] Hinrichs, *Remaking the North American Food System*, 1.

CHAPTER 2: LIBERAL CONVICTIONS AND CONFUSIONS

In this chapter I will examine the most relevant and important moments in liberal intellectual history (while focusing on the American context) as they relate to the agri-food system generally, and the contemporary alternative food movement specifically. This examination will also require a brief explanation of certain conservative ideas. These conservative ideas will then be more fully explicated in Chapter 3.

I am making four main arguments in this chapter. The first is that among liberal farmers' markets participants, the term "liberal" is meaningful in relation to their political identity, but its complex and conflicting meanings that have evolved through time are either misunderstood or ignored. The second argument is that this mostly unconscious confusion over the term "liberal" is due in part to neoclassical liberal economics being adopted into the "conservative" position around the turn of the 20th century, and because of the lingering tensions between "reform liberalism", which tends to be a more moderate position, and the "New Left", which tends to be more radical, within what is commonly, and simply called "liberalism" today. Thirdly, both reform liberalism and New Left ideas are motivators for self-identified liberal farmers' market participants in different ways, but intellectual conflict between these traditions leads to ambivalence about the role of government, business, and science and technology in the agri-food system. In other words, the modes of thinking I outlined in the introduction are clearly motivators, but some

liberals I interviewed follow some modes more than others and disagree about the way these modes connect to the agri-food system. Finally, this conflict and ambivalence not only preclude a clear "liberal" vision of a transformed food system like the one Stephenson et al. call for, but lead to misunderstanding about conservatives and inhibit liberals from seeing the potential for common ground with conservatives.

Classical Liberalism

To begin any explanation of the intellectual odyssey of liberalism, one has to return at least briefly to the 17th century. The English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) is usually considered the father of liberalism and for good reason. While older roots can be found among religious dissenters and reformers such as the Puritans and ancient Greek philosophers and political institutions, Locke developed the first comprehensive and lasting articulation of a liberal political theory. Locke argued in his *Two Treatises on Government*[56] that the fundamental unit of society is the rational individual ultimately concerned with self-preservation. All individuals have equal rights under natural law to life, liberty, and property which are essential for self-preservation and these rights shall not be impinged by any other individual and especially not government. However, because people are rational and realize they cannot, as isolated individuals, completely ensure their rights will be upheld fairly, they recognize the need to enter into a social contract with other individuals to form a society and system of government which will uphold these rights. This fundamental

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[56] John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro, New Haven: Yale University Press 2003.

Lockean conception is common among all ideas of liberalism[57] and is important to establish in relation to different forms of conservatism and to later developments in liberal thought.

The details of how to implement these principles were heavily debated in early American history through the Civil War, especially in terms of how liberty squared with equality and democracy, but there was general agreement among "liberals" (that term would not be consciously adopted until FDR)[58] about basic political economy. For example, many agrarians and observers of political history argue that Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson supported fundamentally different political economic systems; Hamilton was a proponent of manufacturing, finance, global trade and a strong central government, and Jefferson was a proponent of small scale agriculture, economic self-sufficiency and a limited central government. These founders were certainly political rivals and had strong disagreements, but as the historian Joyce Appleby[59] has argued, they shared a belief in the Lockean vision of independent rights-bearing property owners and believed that American prosperity would be achieved through protection of political liberties and promotion of a capitalist (though not completely laissez-faire) economy. The difference is that Hamilton focused on fostering industrial entrepreneurs in part through federal financial incentives and Jefferson focused on fostering commodity farmers through a kind of "competitive advantage" system of strong and independent states. The point

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[57] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 6.
[58] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 170.
[59] Joyce Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic", *Journal of American History*, 68 (1982).

here is Jefferson is not the best starting point for examining the intellectual lineage of contemporary critiques of the food system.

The rise of industrial and corporate capitalism after the Civil war initiated a clearer divide within American liberal tradition. American society underwent profound changes during the period of 1865-1900, often called "The Gilded Age". The changes included mass migration of rural people to the cities, the great expansion of manufacturing, and the rise of corporate trusts and monopolies with a transformed financial system to support those corporate interests.

The British philosopher Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theory of the "survival of the fittest" became a crucial legitimating force for corporate capitalism during this time. Spencer argued that humans were the end result of a natural competitive process from dull simple single celled organisms to the most complex and supreme biological entities possible. Likewise, the achievements of civilization were the products of a natural competitive struggle within human society. If the natural law that "there must be no action that prevents the individual from reaping the benefits or suffering the costs that stem from his action"[60] is upheld, then the strongest, most capable, intelligent, and creative members of society will succeed and contribute to progress. This theory provided a justification for laissez-faire capitalism, and tycoons like Carnegie and Rockefeller adopted and promoted it, seeing themselves as members of the "fittest" class.

As laissez-faire capitalism became the dominating economic force in America, elements of political liberalism began to fuse with conservatism. A key figure in this

[60] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 130.

merger was William Graham Sumner, a professor of sociology at Yale and an influential writer and public intellectual. He "was certainly conservative in the sense that his theory lent itself to the defense of the political and economic status quo of his time...at the same time Sumner would have seen traditional European conservatism as an obscurantist attachment to the past; his thought just as easily can be seen as...the property-oriented right wing of the liberal tradition." Sumner's philosophy was based on materialism. The social good was "'economic power, material prosperity, and group strength for war'".[61] For Sumner, capitalism was equated with civilization; anyone attacking capitalism and wealth was attacking civilization.

Spencer and Sumner threaded three important and powerful Western intellectual traditions: the puritan work ethic (while dropping its Christian skepticism of material wealth), laissez-faire economics, and evolutionary theory. It took on a strange character, promoting laissez-faire except for protective tariffs and trusts and monopolies. This intellectual mixture became increasingly dominant until becoming in mainstream culture basically synonymous with being American after 1920.[62] Sumner's blend of liberalism and conservatism, however, had glaring contradictions. As a conservative, Sumner was non-religious, believed firmly in Enlightenment rationalistic scientific thinking, advocated constant societal innovation, and promoted the rights of the individual above all else. In stark contrast, Edmund Burke, the grandfather of modern conservatism, was deeply

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[61] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 131.
[62] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 131.

religious, thought the wisdom of tradition and culture should guide political policy, was skeptical of rapid change, and upheld the importance of family and community. While Sumner's theory has come to dominate the conservative movement and the Republican Party, the more traditionalist and Burkean strands have never been completely jettisoned. Indeed, these strands are important motivators for contemporary participation in alternative food initiatives among conservatives. These different groups and intellectual tensions will be explored further in Chapter 3.

One response to this justification of corporate capitalism and laissez-faire economic conservatism, especially regarding their impact on agriculture, was populism. During this period, the majority of farmers did not become populists; being isolated was a better predictor of populism than being a poor farmer. Populism is an extremely complex political phenomenon which has taken different forms in different countries. Young offers two potential frameworks for understanding populism. The first is more simple, which captures the populist position as being in support of the masses versus a small cadre of "vested interests marked by a strong tendency towards conspiratorial action." Under this conception, populism can be amendable to both the left and the right. A more complex understanding of populism is that it is "based on the concept of majority rule, a belief in the beneficence and capability of the common man, and a theory of participatory democracy" as opposed to a system of strong structural and constitutional restrictions on the power of the

majority.[63] Populism advocates the decentralization of power, and is thus also part of the intellectual heritage of farmers' markets participants. Decentralization of power through participatory democracy makes populism more amenable to the political left, although certain contemporary conservatives seem to embrace this conception as well.

Returning to the politics of the Gilded Age, the populist People's Party ran James B. Weaver for President in 1892. The party platform stated: "a vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once, it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism." The vague solution was that government should be restored to the "plain people".[64]

Connecting supporters of the alternative food movement, especially conservative supporters, to populism is often a way of dismissing them as bigoted nativists.[65] But a closer look at history reveals that while some populists were nativists and racists, racism and nativism were just as common in other political parties and movements during the post-Civil War years. Moreover, for a brief period Southern white populists collaborated with black ex-slaves. In the following chapter, I will show how nativism is also not necessarily a characteristic of conservative farmers' market participants. Populism had elements of nostalgia, but it wasn't simply reactionary: supporters advocated for progressive causes like term limits,

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[63] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 139.
[64] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 140.
[65] Dupuis and Goodman. "Shall We Go 'Home' to Eat?"

direct election of Senators and other electoral reforms.[66] The populists, being extremely critical of the negative impacts of capitalism, toyed with socialism but ultimately eschewed it because it seemed politically impractical and because they could not abandon their liberal intellectual roots.

Reform Liberalism and the Rise of Conventional Agriculture

Like populism, progressivism was also a complex movement in response to the rise of industrial capitalism as well as corruption in the machine politics of the time. Progressivism and the New Deal programs of FDR that would follow from it are crucial to understanding much of contemporary liberal politics. In response to the rapid change and what they saw as potential chaos, progressives appealed to community and control. Accompanying these came science and pragmatic philosophy. They undertook a host of smaller concerns like women's suffrage and the plight of the urban poor, but their chief concern was concentration of wealth, and the dominance of corporate power and monopolies. Solving these problems would require an activist government, and thus the progressives begun a fundamental shift in the meaning of liberalism. This shift was largely initiated by Theodore Roosevelt who used reform policies to curb the most detrimental effects of industrial capitalism. Here is the beginning of what Young calls "reform liberalism" which starts to diverge significantly from classic, laissez-faire liberalism. Under reform liberalism, "The focus continues to be on the free, equal, rights-bearing individual, but now, it is argued, those individuals may best be served by an active government,

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[66] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 141.

though one that, in economics, still adheres to the theory of the market, albeit in regulated form."[67]

Hence, in terms of food and consumer protection, the Progressive Era produced landmark legislation like the Food and Drugs Act, signed by Teddy Roosevelt in 1906, which regulated dangerous food additives and paved the way for the modern Food and Drug Administration.[68] In terms of agriculture, the post-civil war period and Progressive Era saw numerous highly influential government interdictions into the agricultural economy, notably the creation of the USDA and the passing of Homestead Act (1862), the Morrill Act which created land-grant universities (1862 and 1890), the building of agricultural experimental stations (1887) and the Smith-Lever Act which founded cooperative extension programs for rural and agricultural education (1914). These actions were not unwelcome by farmers themselves, many of whom suffered from the vagaries of the global commodity markets.[69]

Again, while populist suspicion of centralized government had some influence on farmers, the belief that government programs and regulation could lead to a more stable, higher quality of life became more powerful. For instance, as Hurt describes:

> When agricultural prices fell to an index of 124 by 1921, while production costs rose to 155, farmers quickly turned to the federal government. They sought help far beyond the dissemination of agricultural knowledge to improve production. In so doing they turned their backs on the ideal of self-

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[67] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 6.
[68] FDA, "FDA History - Part 1". Food and Drug Administration. http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/WhatWeDo/History/Origin/ucm054819.htm Accessed September 7th 2011.
[69] R. Douglas Hurt. *Problems of Plenty: The American Farmer in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002.

reliance in exchange for the security of an adequate standard of living.[70]

After a period of more laissez-faire administrations in the 1920's and 30's and amongst the onslaught of Great Depression, FDR would return to significant government intervention into agriculture. These efforts were part of his broader New Deal program, which signaled a crucial turning point in the meaning of the word liberal. FDR overtly called himself a "liberal", saying in 1941:

> The liberal party is a party which believes that, as new conditions and problems arise beyond the power of men and women to meet as individuals, it becomes the duty of the Government itself to find new remedies with which to meet them....The conservative party in government honestly and conscientiously believes the contrary....It believes that, in the long run, individual initiative and private philanthropy can take care of all situations.[71]

In FDR's adoption of the label "liberal" he firmly establishes reform liberalism, initiated during the Progressive Era, as the dominant political paradigm. Consequently, "liberal" became a very positive term, and "conservative" and "reactionary" negative terms. This dynamic would last at least until Reagan's presidential victory in 1980. Furthermore, FDR's adoption of "liberal" entrenches significant semantic confusion about the terms "liberal" and "conservative, a confusion initiated by Sumner and his intellectual ilk. For instance, many of those who are now often called conservatives today would be 19th c. free-market liberals.

Thus, government intervention into agriculture was clearly ensconced within the new meaning of liberalism. In order to boost farm incomes ravished by the Depression, FDR created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) in 1933

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[70] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 14.
[71] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 170.

which targeted wheat, cotton, corn, rice, tobacco, hogs, and dairy because they had strong influence on other commodities, could be easily regulated, and had the largest surpluses. It aimed to raise prices farmers received, allowing them to purchase other goods, and stimulate the economy. It did this primarily by paying farmers not to produce through mechanisms called "commodity reduction programs".[72]

These efforts would have dramatic effects on American agriculture and ultimately help establish the "conventional" agri-food system of today. The first program targeted cotton in the South:

> By paying farmers to raise less cotton, the AAA also encouraged mechanization, because landowners often took their checks and bought tractors and other equipment. Thus the AAA began the great enclosure movement in Southern agriculture whereby landowners released their sharecroppers and tenants, combined small farms into large fields, removed houses and fences, and used tractors, cultivators, and mechanical planters to plow, seed, and weed the cotton crop. Then, at harvest time, the landowners hired back many of their old sharecroppers and tenants as day laborers to pick the cotton. When they were not needed, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration offered these workers emergency assistance, essentially providing the "furnish" previously obtained from planters and country merchants. The AAA cotton-reduction program benefited large-scale landowners and planters, who received guaranteed income for removing their acreage from production. But the program drove thousands of men, women, and children, both black and white, from the land without any provision for their most basic needs.[73]

The AAA was then a response to the problems of the global capitalist agricultural market, but its programs ultimately served to prop up industrial agriculture. The AAA is then a microcosm for the New Deal, which was in some ways a continuation of the Progressive Era's response to the problems created by industrial capitalism,

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[72] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 68-73.
[73] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 73.

but in other ways was an effort to reinvigorate it while curbing its worst excesses in order to appease Americans who might be attracted to the more revolutionary programs of Marxism and communism. This perspective formed the basis of a major critique offered by the "New Left" which emerged in the 1950's and 1960's.

The complex legacy of New Deal agricultural policy in combination with New Left ideas described below has led to significant ambivalence among self-identified liberals about the appropriate role of government. For instance, an extremely liberal farmer (again, self-identified) from Madison expressed frustration with government, especially federal regulations that inhibit small farmers like her, but also expressed appreciation of the White House's public support for alternative farmers like her who grow healthier food.

> Political involvement, you know everybody says it has its downfalls but at the same time its kind of been a good and bad relationship with the agricultural industry. The USDA regulations let a lot of stuff slide. For us, it's hard for us because we're a state inspected facility - where we get our [animals] processed is a state inspected facility. The government doesn't allow us to cross state lines with our meat. Now although there has never been an issue with any local meat in Wisconsin of small producers, we're the ones who are being hammered down on. Saying no you can't go down and sell to Chicago which is one of the biggest markets in the Midwest of local food....Nobody's really backing us up. But at the same time you look at Michelle Obama's program. She's the first First [Lady] to do something like this and it's pretty - well I don't know if she's the first, but one of the few that has ever really focused on this and made it very apparent in media. In that sense it's given us a little boost I think, especially for parents because they're so interested in it now.[74]

I asked a different extremely liberal Madison consumer who used to be a vendor at the market about whether small farmers and farmers markets would benefit from more involvement by the USDA, and he responded:

[74] Interview, Madison 1.

> M2: I feel like that's tricky because I don't know that I necessarily wish there was more involvement in what we do but less involvement in the competition. The way subsidies are set up right now are crazy and it makes it difficult to compete equally and that the costs are really hidden [for conventional growers]. It makes me bristle when I hear people say certain things are more expensive than other things just because I know so many of the costs are not passed on correctly to the consumer. But I don't feel like there necessarily needs to be more involvement by the USDA."
>
> AD: How would you like to see subsidy reform?
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> M2: [I don't know enough] but what I do know what we as a government and culture reward sure doesn't feel like the right thing. We've moved a little bit beyond the "get big or get out" but not much pass that. As I undertand the subsidies, they push us towards big, industrial, monocrop operations, and I would say that's exactly the opposite of what we should incentivize and if we could figure out a better way to incentivize small and diverse and innovative ways of growing food, we'd be much better off.[75]

In addition to these thoughts, this farmer was also skeptical of national level agricultural policy. He was very attracted to a more decentralized food system that would be regulated by county or state policies. So, this farmer seems to be struggling with whether federal subsidies should be completely eliminated and federal involvement dramatically curtailed or if federal subsidies should be redirected to support small organic farmers.[76]

One slightly liberal farmer in Alexandria thought that all farmers, whether small or big, played an important role in the food system and that they should be supported and appreciated by the public and the government.[77] On the other hand, when I asked a slightly moderate liberal consumer in Roseau if the USDA should provide subsidies to small vegetable farmers and farmers' markets, she said:

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[75] Interview, Madison 2.
[76] Interview, Madison 2.
[77] Interview, Alexandria 1.

> I think that's one way the USDA could be involved is to get more subsidies for them. Perhaps take it away from the big ones. Because the big ones, I know some of the big ones and they get way too much money. I can only imagine what the huge big ones get, I just know some of our local big farmers and how much money they get from the government and it's unbelievable.[78]

There is clearly some ambivalence and disagreement among liberals at the farmers' marketabout the role government should play in agriculture, however, most supported more government action to support small farmers and less support for large farmers.

The New Left and the "Countercuisine"

As noted earlier in the discussion on ideology, liberal intellectuals like Bell and Lipset were arguing that the establishment of reform liberalism and the subsequent creation of a broad middle class with a high quality of life marked the "end of ideology". Not all liberals agreed, especially the burgeoning Student Left movement, which emerged chiefly at the University of Michigan, the University of California-Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the latter two being land-grant universities established by the Morrill Acts. As Young notes, their "size, complexity, bureaucratic organization, and involvement with big science, often under government sponsorship, made them seem to their critics perfect microcosms of American Society."[79]

Members of the Student Left drew particularly heavily on the ideas of sociologist C. Wright Mills and political theorist Herbert Marcuse. Mills argued all really important matters were decided by the "power elite", a small group formed

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[78] Interview, Roseau 5.
[79] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 192-193.

within the military, corporations, and government. Pluralistic competition was an illusion. Marcuse argued that the homogenization of mass media culture, the uncritical analysis of the academy, and the clutch of the power elite, and the fat and happy Americans made democracy a totalitarian sham. He called for tolerance of radical leftists and intolerance of the right. He called for the "democratic educational dictatorship of free men."[80]

Out of this theoretical milieu arose two central concepts that are central to New Left politics and to contemporary liberal participation in farmers' markets: corporate liberalism and participatory democracy. As I alluded to above, corporate liberalism referred to the New Left critique of reform liberalism and Progressive era ideas and policies. According to this critique, these ideologies were really about maintaining or stabilizing capitalism and its associated organizational, bureaucratic, corporate structure. Participatory democracy was initially a somewhat vague concept articulated by the manifesto of the Student Leftist organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) called the Port Huron Statement: "as a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence on men and provide the media for their common participation." Furthermore, personal decisions, opinions, and circumstances are always political. Therefore, society should "provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration...to relate men to knowledge and power so that private problems--from

[80] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 195.

bad recreation facilities to personal alienation are formulated as general issues."[81] While these were somewhat radical ideas, they were not a complete departure from the liberal tradition, as evidenced, for instance, by its intersection with populism. In other words, participatory democracy was not to replace representative democracy, but supplement it. [82]

The civil rights movement, black power, and feminism were extremely important social and intellectual challenges to the dominant political paradigm that were also central to New Left politics. The more radical or postmodern adherents of these movements were also, and still are, powerful challenges to liberalism's focus on universal equality of individuals, or to put it another way, it's focus on ignoring difference. While these movements are very much connected to food system politics as Guthman, Slocum and others have noted, they are not central to this project. Furthermore, each phenomena contains its own robust complexity and diverse lines of thinking. Therefore, I will refer to them only briefly. Much more space would be needed to address them adequately.

The critique of corporate liberalism and the advocacy of participatory democracy became guiding forces for the 1960's "counterculture" whose adherents began to revolt against the dominant food system established in part by FDR's reform liberal policies. This revolt is thoroughly covered by Belasco.[83] Belasco argues there are three major components to the "counter cuisine" movement of the 1960's:

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[81] The Sixties Project, *Port Huron Statement*. http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html. Accessed August 1st 2011.
[82] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 201.
[83] Belasco, *Appetite for Change.*

1) a critique of processed foods; 2) the desire to make food more fun and enjoyable; 3) the organic paradigm: "which posited a radically decentralized infrastructure consisting of communal farms, cooperative groceries, and hip restaurants."[84] All of these were "fused by a shared context - the ecology movement - and by a shared faith in the power of personal decisions to spawn political transformation."[85]

Belasco traces his own personal story, which in many ways reflects the history of liberalism from the 1950's through the 1980's. He mentions eating some ethnic food made by his grandparents, but his youth and adolescence mostly featured the "standard" affluent suburban fare: lots of red meat and potatoes, and many of the new-fangled processed foods like plastic wrapped American cheese and toaster waffles. This is the "end of ideology" 1950's of Bell and Lipset, the age of plenty and satisfaction. But dissatisfaction with food offerings emerged in the 1960's, mirroring broader political upheavals and the beginnings of the radical left and counterculture. Belasco mentions his father's death in 1967 of a heart attack alerted him to health consequences of processed food, but says his experience as an undergrad and graduate student at U of Michigan (one of the key starting points of the New Left) was really his inspiration for being involved in the counter cuisine. He makes an important connection with his more New Left politics to the reform liberalism tradition by noting he learned to cook in a New Deal era co-op house.[86] His experience was a whirlwind of eating vegetarian, reading Tolstoy and eating "Third World" food. As he enters the 80's, radical food becomes more mainstream,

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[84] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 4.
[85] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 4.
[86] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 6.

illuminating an important tension that exists today in the alternative food movement.

The book, therefore, is a scholarly reconstruction of the episodes Belasco lived through. "This reconstruction, in turn, puts my own dietary experiences in a cultural and political context that I was only dimly aware of as I lived it; Diggers, People's Park, the New Left, Vietnam, Earth Day, feminism, the ethnic revival, Richard Nixon, Gary Snyder--all had a lot to do with what was going on in the kitchens of Ann Arbor, New Haven, Berkeley, and many other hip student zones".[87] In other words, the "counter cuisine" of the 1960's is embedded within the broader "countercultural movement" initiated by New Left politics of the same time.

The countercultural movement was a product of numerous forces, but as Belasco describes, the most important in terms of alternative food initiatives were emerging ideas about ecology and student activism. Ecological ideas were being filtered into popular countercultural understandings through works like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*[88] and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb.*[89] Concerns about pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and soil erosion, amongst a general sense of environmental doom, motivated countercultural radicals to start turning their attention towards "nature" and doing things like growing organic vegetables. Environmental activism melded with student activism at places like People's Park near the University of California-Berkeley and also at the University of Wisconsin-

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[87] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 10.
[88] Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company 2002. Originally published in 1962.
[89] Paul R.Ehrlich. *The Population Bomb*, New York: Sierra Club/Ballantine Books, 1968.

Madison. While the angry strategies of protesting used by the SDS and similar groups began to sow rancorous conflict and infighting among activists, environmentalism provided a softer edge, and food and gardening was seen as something that brought people together versus tearing them apart. Belasco quotes the publication, *Organic Gardening and Farming*: "When the environmental revolutionaries on this campus [Wisconsin-Madison] gather rocks, they're for mulching, not throwing".[90] Environmentalists were seen by the broader public as calmer, more pragmatic, and supportive of political harmony. These were the days of Richard Nixon praising Earth Day, and creating the EPA. Environmentalism could even be patriotic. "No one can say that a man trying to save the American environment does not love his country" argued a founder of Friends of the Earth.[91] Nevertheless, below this gentle veneer there was a deeper critique:

> Industrialism had gone berserk, wrecking the delicate balances of eternity. The notion of technological hubris seemed a plausible alternative to the New Left's now-irritating focus on "Kapitalism." Marxism missed the point, ecologists argued, for modern socialist societies were just as sick. Given the intricacies of the planetary system, simply nationalizing ownership would not work....Only a complete scaling down of technology and technocracy could restore balance. We would have to decentralize production, deproffessionalize knowledge, live more simply.

Ecology, therefore, offered personal action as a legitimate tool vs. electoral politics or Marxist revolution. Likewise, food was a daily thing, unlike other occasional, spontaneous protests. "The New Left has always insisted that the personal was political. What could be more personal than food? And what could be more political than challenging agribusiness...?" (Belasco 28). Among contemporary farmers'

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[90] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 25.
[91] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 25.

market participants there still exists this hesitancy about certain radical New Left ideas, some more amenable than others, which I will highlight below.

Believing in impending ecological disaster, many food radicals (or countercultural "freaks" as Belasco often calls them) promoted everything from the hoarding of dried and canned food to learning how to eat edible weeds. Radicals justified the need for these "survivalist" strategies by arguing

> that there was a conspiracy of agribusiness firms, medical professionals, and government officials.....the same companies produced DDT and defoliants, plastic wrap and napalm....To feed the troops in Vietnam and to break the farm worker's strike at the same time, the Defense Department blatantly bought scab grapes and lettuce. Clearly, these perspectives are marked by populist influences.[92]

As environmentalism raised increasing concern among radicals about the external natural world, "nature" also became a powerful, though nebulous concept for the food movement. Belasco argues the line of thinking was that industrial capitalism and scientific reductionism were making people and the land sick through things like DDT. These forces ultimately implicated "modernity itself" and therefore the solution was to "think primitive. Avoid anything complex, anything you can't pronounce, anything chemical, synthetic, or plastic."[93] The more extreme and romantic adherents to this position advocated a return to a kind of hunter-gatherer subsistence off of wild nuts, fruits, and vegetables. The more moderate adherents equated a return to "natural" food and agriculture in a more peculiar and somewhat arbitrary way: "Many thus drew the line not at manipulation per se, or even at mechanical refining, but at chemical involvement...Wheat could be planted, tended,

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[92] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 29-34.
[93] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 37.

harvested, ground (preferably by stones), kneaded, and baked, but no chemical pesticides, fertilizers, or additives should be used along the way."[94] This way of farming was not a return to the Paleolithic era as some critics lambasted it, but really a return to Pre-WWII farming.

This search for forgotten farming practices led many radicals towards what was starting to be called "organic" agriculture. The work of J.I. Rodale, especially his journal *Organic Gardening*, became an important nexus point for promoting research by the British agronomist Albert Howard to willing leftist hippies. A reviewer in a key countercultural publication, the Whole Earth Catalog, said of Rodale's journal:

> It has occurred to me that if I were a dictator determined to control the national press, *Organic Gardening* would be the first publication I'd squash, because it's the most subversive. I believe that organic gardeners are in the forefront of a serious effort to save the world by changing man's orientation to it, to move away from the collective, centrist, super industrial state, toward a simpler, realer one-to-one relationship with the earth itself.[95]

The Leftist vision of simpler, more decentralized agriculture and society more broadly was filled out in the 1970's through books like Jim Hightower's *Eat Your Heart Out*, a critique of the industrial food system, and E.F. Shumacher's influential book, *Small is Beautiful,* which advocated for relocalizing economic activity through what he called "Buddhist Economics." Charged by this vision, radicals started commune farms which were often shrouded in overly idealistic utopian visions, and thus doomed to fail. For instance, many communes quickly became dysfunctional and oppressive, as male members treated the commune as a place to relax and wax

[94] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 39.
[95] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 72

philosophical, and women were expected to do all the farming and cooking and be always ready for the liberating euphoria of sex. In the face of the failed commune model, other radicals became "hip entreprenuers", forging businesses that were based on the values of the counter cuisine but also hard work and the goal of making a profit. For instance, the herbal tea company Celestial Seasonings was started by Mo Siegel in 1970 and sold teas that "were righteously ecological and healthy: non-caffeinated, additive-free, organically grown, or gathered by hip youth in the wild."[96] The company expanded rapidly, and soon Seigal was succumbing to the more "conventional" capitalist tactics of outsourcing production and marketing, paying low wages, and eventually selling out to Kraft foods. This intermingling of the alternative and the conventional is well documented by Julie Guthman in her 2004 book *Agrarian Dreams*[97] and other more recent research as well.[98]

Prior to the evolution of the "agrarian paradox", early members of the counter cuisine did try hard to forge new rules of radical eating which were substantially different from the dominant paradigm. These rules included abhorrence of unpronounceable chemical ingredients in favor of traditional whole foods which had familiar, traditional names attached to them and a revalorization of mold and microbes which were natural. Thus, there was a celebration of foods like yogurt, raw milk, and homebrewed beer. Furthermore, just the New Left movement sought to

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[96] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 99
[97] Julie Guthman. *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California.* University of California Press, 2004.
[98] Maye et al, *Alternative Food Geographies.*

give voice to diverse cultures and races, it favored diversity and variety of food vs. industrial homogenization.

In the end, as Belasco succinctly summarizes:

> Natural had three reference points: content, time, and attitude. Applied to content, natural food lacked certain ingredients and qualities: preservatives, pesticides, chemicals, and packaging. Applied to time, it suggested old-fashioned cooking, whether homespun America, European immigrant, or Third World—anything not postwar suburban, standardized, too convenient or too sophisticated. As a state of mind, it suggested an enchantment with anything that was not too rationalized, predictable, standardized.[99]

This approach towards "nature" by the radical leftist counterculture, which emerged out of environmentalism, feminism, and multiculturalism, was in many ways very conservative, and is a perspective held by traditionalist conservatives at the farmers' market. And yet, as Belasco points out, while in one sense this perspective was a negating of the conventional and a return to certain former practices, proponents argued that it was a necessary first step towards moving forward to something new and better.

Adventures with Food and Politics

Members of the countercultural New Left also approached the food system through a series of dichotomized principles to help identify themselves. These dichotomies engendered a clear path of action to resist conventionality through personal action. Furthermore, radicals believed that personal activism focused on eating, cooking, and growing food would not just be culturally transformative but also fun and enjoyable too.

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[99] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 41.

One important principle was variety vs. conformity or "improvisation vs. specialization". This principle called for dumping the strict meat and potatoes white American diet, and breaking free from the increasingly homogenized (albeit) abundant choices at the supermarket, like eating only one variety of orange (Sunkist navel) or only iceberg lettuce. The idea was to try new varieties like blood oranges, or beet and dandelion greens, and experimenting with new food combinations. Belasco argues that this approach is partly motivated by the counterculture's infatuation with psychedelic drugs and their accompanying mental liberation.

While hallucinogenic drugs do not appear to play a role in the contemporary alternative food movement, variety still does, in part because of its deeper connections. Belasco notes that Frances Moore Lappe was a key figure in linking this search for variety with ecology and political economy. At first the "new combinations restored a sense of intentionality and contact--key therapeutic goals--to what had previously seemed humdrum choices. As new types of combinations became more attractive, shopping for food and cooking was no longer unconscious and boring, but a real adventure."[100] Lappe made a further realization that pairing things like rice and beans was a less expensive, more ecologically sound way to eat protein, as opposed to energy wasting grain-fed beef or chicken.

Several of the liberals I interviewed claimed variety and diversity as key motivators, yet revealed conflicted feelings about a radical transformation of the conventional food system. For instance, an Alexandria farmer who described himself

[100] Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 46.

as moderately liberal said the reason he has chosen to sell at the farmers' market and why he thinks people shop there is because the market is

> A little more unique. You know the cookie cutter thing. With fast food there's not the differentiation, the cookie cutter, the same mold. It's a little more adventuresome, try something different. Some days with the blueberries I have 2 or 3 different varieties, and I ask what flavor do you want? And they're kinda like....Apples, you know they've got different apples, everything is a little different a little unique. People can be adventuresome.[101]

He expands on these ideas, clarifying his critique of the "cookie cutter" industrial food system, and even reveals a little of the romantic countercultural attraction to primitive nature:

> AD: Ultimately would you like to see more people shopping at farmers' markets, more people buying local produce and less at the big box stores?
>
> A1: Yeah, they got their stuff, but we have more varieties. Even the varieties that I grow in my soil are different than the next vendor. And what I like to grow, somebody else may not like to grow. So, it's more variety, more colors, flavors...The big box, everything has to fit the same...the pork chop has to be the same size now, next month, 3 months from now. The burger at the fast food place, it gonna be the same this year, last year, 10 years from now and 10 years ago, you gotta have that same thing. Everything comes, even restaurants have a lot of heat and serve products rather than made from scratch. Some people are into more so the few ingredients.
>
> AD: What's bad about pork chops being all the same? What's bad about uniformity?
>
> A1: Well, it's not bad but you kinda get stuck in ruts....I just like my food kind of plain. I don't need to add a lot of sauce or dips...mainly just the vegetables...you don't need a lot of spices or sauces. There's enough flavor already! Just savor what's there instead of...sometimes they just cover up the flavor, trying to fix something. I guess - live adventuresome, try something different...More like it was thousands of years ago at the markets. People shop for the day or two days and bring it home. Gleaning from back in the wild, picking berries to eke out a living.

He's also critical of the industrial food system for focusing on cheap, unhealthy food:

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[101] Interview, Alexandria 1.

> Farmers get criticized, but big boxes that are bigger, have half the groceries in the country. People don't realize that. With all the food things, obesity and that kind of stuff. What impact does big box have, they have a blank look. They sell half the groceries in the country, they determine - they want things cheap, have people locked in, they have to get cheaper. Well, we're at the point now, there is no cheaper. We're getting stuff from China that's cheaper, but not necessarily better. Do you want good stuff or cheap stuff?[102]

Yet, despite this farmer's deeply held critique and his identification with New Left values, he doesn't see efforts like the farmers' market as a clear political economic alternative, but something more like a niche addition to the industrial food system. In other words, his political stance leans towards reform liberalism.

> AD: So you're saying [small sweet corn producers] are different or better than those people producing [industrial] corn syrup?
>
> A1: ...I don't like to run down or belittle them. That's a system, but it's not like a choice. The farmer gets up in the morning says well I have do this or spray this, and have to haul this. The bankers, the financiers, the legislators in Congress make the laws and USDA. The parameters influence how people farm. The volume, you need get bigger because the margins are getting smaller in most cases. You've got to kind of adapt. Farmers are criticized for the ethanol thing. You've got the corn, a general, standard commodity that they grow and invest in research to develop the ethanol industry that helps to market their product. People criticize that whereas Med-tronic [a health care technology company] develops that, or the petroleum industry or whatever developing new products to help people. And they say "Oh wow, this is wonderful!" The farmers are always a little suspect sometimes. You just need to appreciate all of agriculture and farmers. There's ways we could do things better, so we go to the trade shows and the workshops and seminars and all those things, see how other people do it. Farm tours. Either it fits or it doesn't, there's always little bits and pieces you can pick up
>
> AD: So if sounds like you think there's a place for every type of farmer, that the large conventional farmers is producing corn to be processed into corn syrup - there's a place for them and a place for a small 1 acre farm.
>
> A1: Yep. I shouldn't impose my beliefs on people.[103]

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[102] Interview, Alexandria 1.
[103] Interview, Alexandria 1.

Ultimately, this farmers adherence to the liberal value of tolerance and his sympathy towards his fellow farmers trumps any other ideological position he might hold.

Process

Another key principle for the countercuisine was “process, not product”, which emphasized spiritual holism vs. scientific reductionism. Radicals were reacting to nutritional scientists who argued all people needed to be healthy was the appropriate aggregate of calories, minerals, and vitamins, a position which radicals felt alienated eaters from their food, nature, and their spiritual selves. To a lesser degree, shifting focus to “process” also meant paying attention to how the food was being grown and processed, whether artificial pesticides or fertilizers were being used, and how farm workers and animals were treated.

This latter element is certainly an important motivator for liberals at the farmers’ market, and a point of general consensus. Many liberals spoke about the farmers’ market as a place for consumers to learn about how their food was grown and processed, and even in some instances, how they could grow it themselves in ways they deemed more environmentally sustainable.

For instance, an extremely liberal consumer from Madison who used to sell at the market said about interactions with customers, that: “I definitely like that part, educating people about the food.... I really like when the conversation with customers gets into organic, and organic practices, actual methods we use in

producing the stuff."[104] A different extremely liberal Madison farmer compared her reasons for selling wholesale vs. at the market, saying:

> Wholesale accounts are nice because they're reliable. If somebody has something on their menu or a special, they're going to order it every week from me. So in that sense it's nice because you have a consistent supply of money coming in from one entity. But the farmers' market is a little different. Obviously the amount of money we get is variable, but there's so much more satisfaction out of it, providing food to people who are genuinely concerned about where their food comes from and how it's produced or how it's raised.[105]

An extremely liberal customer in Alexandria highlighted labor practices as an important reason she shops at the market vs. Walmart:

> I've never thought how I purchase food as a political issue, so that's a new concept for me...Because I'm not consciously thinking politically when I'm shopping. But I guess, in a way maybe I do because I refuse to shop at Walmart. I will not go into a Walmart.... [My husband] has to sneak there if he tries to go to Walmart, and it's because I am upset with their political policies, the way the treat their employees, their benefits program, what they do in small communities, to come in and then push out the small business owners....I met a woman who got me onto a website that was very political, and very anti-you know, the big corporations and what they've done. So I guess in a way, when I do think about that I do shop with political...But when I go to the farmers' market I'm not thinking politically.[106]

Intriguingly, this customer was clearly concerned about how labor was involved in producing and selling her food (among other items), but she did not immediately see this as a political issue. Furthermore, in relation to her purchasing habits, the New Left dictum that the personal is political was not something she firmly believed in or had been aware of. So, while she identified as "extremely liberal" she did not identify

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[104] Interview, Madison 2.
[105] Interview, Madison 1.
[106] Interview, Alexandria 3.

as much with New Left, radical politics, which was often connoted for others who identified themselves as “extremely liberal”.

This mental disconnection between the food system and politics was not uncommon (among both liberals and conservatives), which is surprising for those of us scholars and researchers who are steeped in the belief that the two are intricately connected, which is probably also indicative of the influence of New Left politics in the framing of the alternative food movement. A Roseau customer who identified herself as “moderate” or “slightly liberal” had to process her thoughts out loud when I asked if her political beliefs influenced the way she purchased food, indicating she hadn’t ever considered the connection before: “I don’t know...I don’t know if it really affects it. It might....I don’t know. I’m not sure if it has any effect on what I purchase or not.”[107]

While there was general consensus among liberals about the importance of how food is grown and processed, there was more disagreement about diet and nutrition. An extremely liberal farmer from Madison encapsulated the countercuisine’s valorization of eating and cooking whole foods and rejection of the definition of good food as either a sum of nutrients or what is heavily marketed by the food industry:

> [My partner and I] feel so strongly about the local food movement and about healthy nutritious food. With my work [as an activist] I see those faults every day with our food system especially with the farm to school program. It’s really frustrating to see and read articles about all these kids’ biased perspective of food. They think chicken McNuggets is food, and it’s like really?

[107] Interview, Roseau 5.

> People think everything is so much more expensive but really it's just an education on how to utilize something to its full extent. For instance: broccoli. This person bought broccoli from this farmer next to me and she was pissed that there was so much stem on it, and I said to her - I just looked at her and looked at the farmer - you could just see the frustration on her face. You know, that's edible, you know you don't just have to eat the tops of the greens that everybody promotes or packages in freezer bags. The rest of it's edible and just as, or more nutritious, than the tops.[108]

Contrastingly, an extremely liberal Alexandria consumer held firmly to a more reductionist view of nutrition. While she was troubled by the industrial food system, she thought that keeping yields high both to support farmers and to feed those who are suffering from food insecurity was most important, and thus any way a person can get calories and vitamins is sufficient, as long as they get them:

> A3: I don't believe we can change what we've come to in producing crops. And I support that in terms of feeding the world if we could figure out how to distribute it all, I mean we've got enough food. That's good, we just have to figure out politically how to get it to everybody. There should not be hungry people in this world, ever.
>
> AD: So the model of conventional agriculture is OK as long as that food is distributed?
>
> A3: Exactly. It would be like saying, well - the holistic healthcare - I'm in to holistic, but we have medicine and all those things to cure. It would be foolish to say we should only use holistic. When we have to achieve that knowledge it's OK to use it.
>
> AD: You mentioned before that you support organic agriculture.
>
> A3: Yes.
>
> AD: So, that might be different from conventional agriculture. Would you like to see more conventional farmers going organic, or it's not necessary?
>
> A3: You know, I don't feel qualified to answer that, simply in that I don't understand the ramifications for the cost for the farmer to do that, I know [a

[108] Interview, Madison 1.

> relative], he's a farmer, but of an individual family farm, but I also know he spends $75,000 a year on fertilizer and he puts chemicals on his land, but I don't know that he could make it and produce without doing that so I don't if you could go all organic.... I know that our bodies don't know if it's organic or a regular orange, it processes the vitamin C within it even if it's in a concentrate. I mean people would disagree with that, but in reality our bodies need that nutrient and if they get it in a pill...I always think the fresh orange is best, but in reality it's the same.[109]

These differing views on diet and nutrition indicate some of the tensions between reform liberalism and the New Left, but also an unresolved ambivalence about science and technology. Again, while the extremely liberal Alexandria consumer was supportive of a more reductionist scientific approach, an extremely liberal farmer in Madison was appalled by this approach. When I asked him about what organic agriculture means to him and what it means to others, including his customers, he said

> The question you get more often than not is, do you spray? ...That's a deep question. You can't answer that question yes or no and know anything about what that produce is about.... In my opinion that's simply not the question to ask....For a couple years I sold next to this hydroponic grower and it was hard to bite my tongue on that. I must have heard him get asked a hundred times, do you spray? And he quite truthfully with a big smile on his face, answered, "no." They would buy it and it was all I could do to not just shout, "Yeah, but he didn't use soil either! What about the fact that you grew your produce in a chemical soaked sponge?"...In theory the organic growers job is to not think about the plant, but about the soil....To a lot of conventional growers, the soil is the thing that holds the plant up and then you're adding whatever it is that it needs. You're not doing that through crop rotation or adding organic matter or organic inputs, you're doing that, it's just a formula, N P K or whatever.[110]

Race and Cultural Politics

[109] Interview, Alexandria 3.
[110] Interview, Madison 2.

As civil rights, and black and brown power movements gained steam in the 1960's they were also impacting the food movement, and gave rise to another dichotomized principle, "brown vs. white." Belasco summarizes well the broad symbolic force this principle had, linking food with politics, science and technology:

> Whiteness meant Wonder Bread, White Tower, Cool Whip, Minute Rice, instant mashed potatoes, peeled apples, White Tornadoes, white coats, white collar, whitewash, White House, white racism. Brown meant whole wheat bread, unhulled rice, turbinado sugar, wildflower honey, uncultured molassess, soy sauce, peasant yams, "black is beautiful". Darkness was funky, earthy authentic, while whiteness, the color of powerful detergents, suggested fear of contamination and disorder.

Contemporary critics like Guthman would argue this valorization of non-white cultures through symbolic food choices was part of a superficial or paternalistic attempt at achieving racial justice, and it still is. Others like Lydia Zepeda[111] disagree, and burgeoning initiatives like Growing Power led by African-Americans in rust belt cities like Milwaukee may prove otherwise[112]. In the interviews I conducted, race was only explicitly raised by one person, an extremely liberal farmer in Madison. She agrees with the critique that farmers' markets customers are mostly white, but not all.

> I guess for us our customer base is mostly white Americans, that's what it is and we can't do anything different about it. But we get a lot of ethnicities that come in and say "you sell products that my mother used to grow or raise." For instance, chicken feet. The Hmong love chicken feet and they can't find

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[111] See Lydia Zepeda. et al. "Organic Food Demand: A Focus Group Study Involving Caucasian and African-American Shoppers" *Agriculture and Human Values*, 23(2006): 385-394; and Lydia Zepeda and J. Li, "Characteristics of Organic Food Shoppers" *Journal of Agriculture and Applied Economics* 39 (2007): 17-28

[112] Growing Power, is a non-profit organization founded by Will Allen, an African-American, which raises vegetables, fish, goats, and turkeys on a two acre urban farm in Milwaukee and has similar projects in Chicago and Madison, WI. The farm serves neighborhood residents, many of who are non-white and low income, and also runs numerous farming, gardening, cooking, and business workshops.

> them at a conventional grocery store, so there's things like that: gizzards, hearts, liver. So, although it is the lower class food, it's still letting those people maintain their culture of food. I think that's what's kind of nice, we cater to all those, we don't just sell wholes, we don't just sell breasts, we allow people to buy anything and everything.[113]

This farmer also makes a connection here between food choices and the alternative food movement's preference for and support of traditional cultural meals. Later in the interview this farmer also mentions Growing Power and the belief that similar organizations can broaden the diversity of those shopping at the farmers' market.

> For instance, the East Side market is located right in the Wil-Mar neighborhood. I would say 99% of the kids who attend that area, that center, are black. It's hopefully generating some type of interest. "You know I see that farmers' marketout there when I'm playing dodge ball every single week maybe I should go look at it".... You've got people like Will Allen down at Growing Power who's focusing on minorities an really trying to get them in the Milwaukee area to be interested in it.[114]

While this farmer expressed a solid sense of nuances and importance of race and class in the alternative food movement, it was not necessarily at the forefront of other liberals' minds. These interviews, therefore, corroborate the argument that racial justice and cultural diversity are still unresolved issues within the movement, as they are unresolved within liberal and leftist political theory. This unresolved tension, added to ambivalence about the role of government and science technology, reveal a lack of a coherent vision among liberals about how to transform the food system, preventing cohesion into the movement that Stevenson et. al argue for. It also reveals unresolved tensions between reform liberalism and New Left ideas that began in that 1960's, which I believe might be stalling political action and

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[113] Interview, Madison 1.
[114] Interview, Madison 1.

substantive agri-food policy change among liberals. My speculation, is that because reform liberals and New Leftists are still negotiating strong disagreements among themselves, framing conservatives as the common enemy is the only way to create some sense of unity. This framing has played a role in increasing political polarization and solidifying simplistic portrayals of conservatives among liberals. The next chapter will examine the complexity of conservatism and which elements are more likely to motivate conservatives to participate in farmers' markets and why.

CHAPTER 3: CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUES AND VISIONS

While conservatism can be considered an ideology, it is by no means monolithic. In actuality, contemporary conservatism in America is characterized by several quite distinct groups which might be called sub-ideologies. A number of scholars have analyzed these sub-ideologies and developed slightly different typologies. I will use a variety of scholarly treatments and primary source material from self-identified conservatives to articulate what I think is a useful coherent typology.

As I had begun to show in the introduction, the richness and complexity of American conservatism is often misunderstood or at least little explored by scholars of food system politics. I will admit that prior to researching this project, as a scholar and engaged citizen, I thought I had a solid understanding of conservatism, but in fact did not. Based on my interviews and conversations with various people about my project, I think much of the American public, especially those who are liberal or left-leaning, also do not have a particularly good understanding of conservatism.

If one examines the diversity of contemporary positions and complicated history of conservatism in America, poor comprehension is actually not surprising. How can George W. Bush, who presided over significant consolidation and amplification of federal executive power and Congressman Ron Paul who wants to eliminate several executive cabinet departments such as the Departments of Energy and Education both be conservatives? Likewise, how can Richard Nixon, who created

the Environmental Protection Agency and signed the Clean Air Act, and Ronald Reagan whose cabinet officials aggressively tried to eliminate National Parks and ease regulations on mining and petroleum industries both be conservatives? A final and especially salient query: how can journalist Rod Dreher, who is overtly critical of big business and supports local, small-scale organic agriculture and the Koch brothers, who own one of the world's largest synthetic nitrogen fertilizer companies and bankroll many political initiatives be conservatives? To solve these puzzles I will delineate the different conservative sub-ideologies. While politicians, prominent public figures, and intellectuals more clearly fit into these sub-ideologies than the conservatives I spoke with, I still believe these categories are useful to better understanding the motivations of farmers' market participants and how they connect with their political views. I will argue that the modes of thinking central to the alternative food movement are motivators for contemporary conservatives at farmers markets and they have deep and complex roots in conservative intellectual history. Furthermore, I hope to make abundantly clear in this chapter that conservatives are not simply unthinking reactionaries obsessed with nostalgia, nativism, racism, paranoia, or greed, a characterization that emerged among liberal scholars in the 1950's[115] and lingers in today's food scholarship. Moreover, an examination of conservative intellectual history reveals a rich heritage that is full of insight, vigor, internal conflict, and is paradoxically at times extremely forward looking and at other times focused on the distant past. Lastly, I will argue along with historian Patrick Allitt that what holds the conservative sub-ideologies together is an

[115] Gary Schneider. ed. *Conservatism in America Since 1930*. New York, NYU Press, 2003.

attitude rather than a fixed set of ideas but that there may be unresolvable contradictions in the current conservative political coalition.[116] Forging new coalitions and creating new political visions both across and within the left and the right will be essential to transforming the food system. Whether the farmers' market is or can be a place for generating these new coalitions and visions will be the subject of Chapter 4.

Conservatives can be divided into four distinct sub-ideologies, as indicated by the table below. A variety of labels are used in scholarly literature to describe these groups. I will be using the labels in the left-hand column, and in the right-hand column I list some of the other labels often used. Each label has a slightly different connotation and can often be a source of confusion or oversimplification. I've used the labels that I think are the least confusing despite still not being perfect.

MY LABELS	OTHER LABELS
Neoconservatives	*none commonly used*
Theoconservatives	Christian Fundamentalists; Christian Conservatives; The Religious Right
Libertarians	Classic Liberals; Free-Market Conservatives; Laissez-Faire Conservatives; Neoliberals
Traditionalists	Paleoconservatives; Burkean Conservatives

[116] Patrick Allitt. *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

These are not mutually exclusive categories. Many of these groups share certain views, and individual conservatives I interviewed tended to hold a unique combination of positions that could be placed in two or more categories. Nevertheless, the categories are useful for articulating real and sometimes hotly contested differences among conservatives. I will pay particular attention to the traditionalists as this sub-ideology is especially influential for conservative farmers' markets participants.

Neoconservatives

Neoconservatives emerged in response to liberal political dominance from the New Deal into the 1960's. Many early prominent Neoconservatives were liberals, leftists, and anti-communists who became disillusioned by Stalinism, authoritarianism, and the New Deal. They became fervent anti-communists after World War II. The most influential thinkers, such as Irving Kristol and Daniel Patrick Moynihan came from Jewish and Catholic backgrounds.[117]

Because of their defection from liberal and leftist positions they have had complex views on social and domestic issues. They have been critical of growing government bureaucracy, believing that bureaucrats were not objective servants of the public but primarily motivated by the personal gain they would receive from growing government welfare programs. They are supporters of capitalism because they see it as the most appropriate economic system for the classic liberal democracy brilliantly designed by the founding fathers. However, they recognize, unlike libertarians, that unchecked pursuit of pure materialistic self-interest can lead to

[117] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 203-210.

moral decline. Therefore they value highly the moral principles passed on since the beginnings of Western Civilization. Thus, in Irving Kristol's phrasing, they give "two cheers for capitalism."[118] Consequently, they are also highly critical of countercultural movements like the sexual revolution because they denigrate important traditions like marriage.

Neoconservatives do not shy away from critique of societal inequality, but are skeptical of utopian social planning as a remedy. They have a very strong preference for social stability. Change and reform is sometimes necessary, but should never be pursued by radically destabilizing society. In other words, "Marxists analyzed society in order to overthrow it. These ex-Marxists analyzed it in order to stabilize it."[119] In recent decades, especially during the George W. Bush administration, neoconservatives have been more closely associated with their foreign policy. Key figures are Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, architects of the war in Iraq and advocates of a global American military force and interventionism. Therefore, clearly identifiable neoconservative views were not especially prevalent in any of my interviews.

Tempered Libertarianism

While neoconservatives advocate for a proactive government action to counter what they see as disorder, libertarians tend to see state action as only necessary when the liberty of one individual is actively being impinged by another. Libertarians emphatically believe in the sanctity of individual liberty and private property. In

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[118] Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, (New York: New American Library 1978).
[119] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 206.

general, they are highly critical of government intervention in both the free-market economy and the lives of private citizens. They believe that talented self-interested individuals, given free rein to create and innovate within a capitalist system, are the source of all real progress and societal advancement. They usually want to dramatically decrease the size of government, especially the federal government. While earlier British thinkers such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and J.S. Mill laid the ground work for libertarianism, it was largely developed into its contemporary form by 20th century economists such as Frederick von Hayek and Milton Friedman and philosophers such as Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick. Libertarians are probably the clearest intellectual descendants of "classic liberals" like William Graham Sumner.

Some of the conservatives I spoke to espoused libertarian positions regarding the agricultural economy, but these positions were usually tempered by other values or modes of thinking. The most fervent articulation came from a conservative vendor who maintained a small farm as well as an off farm job. This was one of the few statements I heard from conservatives that was explicitly judgmental of low-income people and ignored potential barriers like access to land:

> A5: You wanna know the reason we continue our garden?... It pays our taxes and takes care of some extra bills and we can have some extra money to spend. Rather than sit around and do nothing! It's ridiculous....Take...the food shelf. When you see some of those people come in, you wonder why in the world can't people like that get down and their hands and knees and plant something. We don't regret bringing it to them. But we think there's too many of them sitting there waiting for stuff, doing nothing.
>
> AD: So, in a way, you see as a way to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. That you can grow your own food, you can make enough money to live and why can't anyone do that.

A5: Right. [120]

In contrast, the views of a different conservative vendor from Alexandria seemed at first orthodox libertarian regarding the downsizing of government, but were really more anti-authoritarian, and revealed the populist and direct democratic modes of thinking. When I asked her what being conservative meant to her, she said

> Being conservative means that I'm - we should rely on ourselves. We should be the producers and we should morally think of producing things that are a benefit to everybody we do produce. We should be producing the best we can to send. Really, we should kind of do it within ourselves and not expect help from others - well, what kind of help? We need help from others - we need the libraries, we need all these things. But we don't need people to say, "You must raise so and so many crops on your farm, you must do this on your farm." We should be doing this ourselves. We should be determining what is best for the land and ourselves, doing the best we can to produce the best crop we can. [121]

This same farmer also gave a clearer articulation of a belief in participatory democracy then any of the liberals I interviewed. After she expressed a strong critique of agri-business, I asked how the power of agri-business could be best contested, and she responded: "It has to be from the people. And it has grown immensely. And it will be the people who change this, it won't be government, it won't be universities because they're slowly coming around to our way. It will be the people who say we are not going to let you people do these things to us".

A conservative farmer in Madison who was very concerned about the negative consequences of conventional farming on human and animal health thought that informed consumer choice would be the best way to solve these problems:

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[120] Interview, Alexandria 5.
[121] Interview, Alexandria 6.

> Well, it' free enterprise out there so everybody can do what they want. But, ideally, yes there should be more healthy, naturally raised animals. What I would prefer is that packages labeled where [and how] that animal was raised, give the consumers the choice. Inform the consumer, let them do what they want to do....The mass production things are cheaper per pound, but the quality suffers. Thus, you have to give the consumer that option. Now, some people can handle those more chemicals than other people and it doesn't bother them. The trouble is by the time you learn you are one of those people that can have it, it's probably too late.[122]

So, while he advocated product labeling within a "free enterprise" system he recognized it may not be a panacea because the relationship between an individual's health and decision making is often complicated. Furthermore, it was clear in the interview that concerns about the health of people, animals, and the land, was just as important if not more important than the libertarian leanings he had.

The Role of Religion

In stark contrast to libertarians, theoconservatives tend to be much more comfortable with government enforcing their version of morality. Theoconservatives are generally Christians who are deeply troubled by what they see as the increasing power of secular and materialist (in the metaphysical sense) worldviews. They believe firmly that the Judeo-Christian tradition is the real source of American identity and virtue. To stray from it is to lose the essence of America and head into chaos and moral depravity. Theoconservatives tend to be either Evangelicals or Catholics versus members of mainline Protestant denominations, like Episcopalian or Lutheran, who tend to be more liberal.[123] This divide is partly the result of mainline Protestant denominations connecting the Gospels with Progressive ideals

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[122] Interview, Madison 3.
[123] Bill Bishop. *The Big Sort: Why The Clustering of America Is Tearing Us Apart*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

at the turn of the 20th century. They began focusing on social issues like poverty and public health, which engaged them in the political arena. Throughout most of the 20th century Evangelicals were less organized, and focused more on individual salvation and personal morality, thus making them less inclined towards political activity. Jerry Falwell, the influential televangelist first ascribed to the dictum that "Preachers are not called to be politicians, but soul-winners."[124]

However, the cultural upheavals of the 1960's and 70's including the rise in pre-marital and extra-marital sex, increase in recreational drug use, feminism, the gay rights movement, and especially the Roe v. Wade ruling on abortion convinced them they could remain apolitical no more. Up through the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, when Evangelicals did vote they tended to favor the Democratic Party. While Carter was a devout Evangelical Christian himself, his political policies had to appeal to his liberal base, resulting in an exodus of Evangelicals from the Democratic Party and into overtly conservative politics. Falwell changed his mind about politics, arguing that "Satan had mobilized his forces to destroy America.... God needed voices raised to save the nation from inner moral decay."[125] In the last few decades, organizations like the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and Focus on the Family, have raised millions of dollars and millions of followers to fight for their causes and influence sympathetic politicians.[126]

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[124] John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, New York: Penguin 2004, 84.
[125] Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 84.
[126] Catholic thinkers like Richard Neuhaus have also found common ground with conservative Evangelicals, using Catholic tradition and papal letters for inspiration.

These groups represent a rather extreme version of theoconservatives. Several of the conservatives I spoke with said Christianity was extremely important to their worldview, and while concerned about issues like abortion, they saw the intersection of religion and politics less dogmatically. They connected their Christian values to the way they farmed, the way they thought about health, nutrition, their communities and society more broadly. When I asked a (self-identified) slightly conservative consumer in Roseau about how important her political beliefs were to her identity she said:

> I can't really say I'm strong Republican or strong Democrat or strong Tea Party. There's good on both sides. I think our spiritual scale has more to do with it than our political scale. Truly if God has entrusted me with this, what do I do with it. I think we feel more called to be accountable to a higher call than my political party.[127]

She said that her spiritual beliefs motivated her to be skeptical of what she saw as America's culture of excess, and that food and drink should be enjoyed and eaten in moderation. Moreover, her Christianity called her and her family to take care of her neighbors and fellow community members:

> If somebody comes into [my husband's] office and wants to sell something, [he] will buy it. If somebody comes in and says I'm out of work, [he] will say, 'I'll hire you.' He'll have a lady come in who has a handicapped daughter, and they pick blueberries – they just know he will buy all their blueberries because that's their form of living....When you shop...people need to know you're supporting this community. We will pay more [for local products].[128]

But this ethic of care was not necessarily applied exclusively to her local community. She and many of her family members had spent time volunteering in "3rd world" countries, citing Tony Campolo, a Christian Evangelical minister and college

[127] Interview, Roseau 4
[128] Interview, Roseau 4

professor, as an inspiration. She also struggled with how to address poverty and inequality in the United States. Fascinatingly, she articulated a position that negotiated libertarian, communitarian, and progressive modes of thinking:

> Truly, if I lived in a perfect world, our communities would be supplying what's needed, whether it is housing, whether it is protection...We should be doing it without the government having to step in. But because we don't, our government needs to step in. We're going to become more socialized simply because of neglect more than the government demanding to take over. The government is being forced to take over out of our neglect to do what we should be doing. When we don't care for our brothers and our neighbors then the government has to be forced.[129]

So, instead of marshaling Christianity in the Manichean way of prominent theoconservatives like Falwell to judge others personal behavior, her religion primarily inspired her to want to help those who were marginalized or less fortunate, and question broader cultural and political economic paradigms. Religion served as a similar motivation for a conservative farmer. When I asked why he believed in small, localized food systems and using organic farming practices he said, "I farm the way I do because I recognize it was all created by a creator and in deference to him I want to try and do it so that he's pleased with me."[130] Yet, he emphasized that his Christianity was most influential in motivating him to work with marginalized populations. For instance, he said

> My wife and I...we're involved in a lot of prison ministry, jail work, working with men and women who've gotten on the wrong path and now they're struggling to get their feet under them. Some of them want to go God's way, get their lives changed around. That actually occupies our thinking a lot more than my farming. I do farming to make a living, but our lives are revolving around people.[131]

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[129] Interview, Roseau 4
[130] Interview.
[131] Interview.

Traditionalism: Critiquing The Mainstream

The Roseau consumer above also held some views that could be considered traditionalist conservative. Traditionalists tend to look to the past for inspiration and guidance. They strongly believe that institutions such as family, marriage, and republican government represent the accumulated wisdom of past generations, and should be protected from radical change or upheaval. They are not necessarily opposed to change, but believe it should happen slowly and with considerable deliberation. Traditionalists believe in natural and moral laws that transcend ephemeral societal mores and ethical debates. They are skeptical of social planning based solely on rationalistic and scientific principles. There is considerable disagreement among traditionalists about economics, but there is general agreement that some form of a free-market economy is the best system, and socialistic controlled economies are deplorable. That being said, most traditionalists believe the free-market has to be strongly tempered by virtues inculcated through culture, and abhor selfish materialism. They are highly skeptical of liberalism and its emphasis on the sovereignty of the individual, and believe firmly in the importance of community and social context for determining personal identity and purpose. Historically, they were often critical of equality as a social goal, believing people are naturally born unequal, and that society needs different classes and orders to function.

Traditionalists have tended to be outside the mainstream of conservative

thought and politics in American history, but they have appeared repeatedly. For instance, in the decades after the Civil War, as industrial capitalism expanded rapidly, Brooks and Henry Adams (descendants of founding father John Adams) emerged as important traditionalist thinkers. Brooks Adams wrote *The Law of Civilization and Decay* in 1895, arguing that civilization is a product of staunch religious piety, artistic creativity and a powerful military force. The proliferation of greed and materialism, encouraged among capitalists, leads to the erosion of civilization. He pined for a romanticized version of the middle ages. His brother, Henry Adams, famously compared "The Dynamo and The Virgin" in his autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams* saying artistic representations of the Virgin Mary represents a beauty, magnetism, and brilliance greater than all electrical turbines and generators of the world.[132]

In the mid-20th century, Richard Weaver and Russel Kirk wrote works that have been deeply influential for traditionalists up to today. Richard Weaver "saw single-minded free-market fanatics, indeed, as one of the symptoms of a sick society."[133] In his 1948 book, *Ideas Have Consequences*, he argued that the Middle Ages focused on the glorification of God while contemporary society focuses on accumulating wealth and reducing the universe to scientific entities. He believed in natural hierarchy and the power of fraternity vs. equality. "The ancient feeling of brotherhood carries obligations for which equality knows nothing. It calls for respect and protection, for brotherhood is status in family and family is by nature

[132] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 109-112
[133] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 165

hierarchical...fraternity directs attention to others, equality to self, and the passion for equality is simultaneous with the growth of egotism."[134]

Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*[135] canonized in his mind the conservative tradition starting with Edmund Burke. Crucially, he left out classical liberals and libertarians. Kirk believed there are eternal, immutable natural moral laws, which are best articulated in the Catholic tradition. These laws were in stark opposition to several dangerous modern intellectual movements, including the rationalism of the French Enlightenment thinkers who believed that purely rational and technical planning of societies is possible; the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham that treats all people as equals and the natural world as a material resource to be exploited; the romantic emancipatory politics of Rousseau; the scientific positivism of Comte; and the collectivist materialism of Marx and other socialists. All of these movements violate the natural laws, despise traditions so dear to Kirk, fatally believe in the perfectibility of human beings, and argue for economic and political leveling. Many leftists draw considerable inspiration from these movements maligned by Kirk, and thus there would seem to be nothing but an irreconcilable divide remaining. But crucially, Kirk also deplores capitalism, which like communism or state socialism is a materialist system that neglects and denigrates spiritual values. Rod Dreher argues that

> readers who know their conservative history will find that what follows comes straight out of the traditionalist school of Richard Weaver, Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, and other seminal thinkers who helped spark the postwar

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[134] Allit, *The Conservatives*, 167
[135] Russell Kirk. *The Conservative Mind*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company 1953.

> renascence of intellectual conservatism. It's high time for a revival of their kind of conservatism, because today, we are living out the fulfillment of Kirk's 1954 warning about naïve libertarian optimism of the sort to which too many of us on the Right have succumbed.[136]

In Dreher's mind, the authentic version of conservatism is really traditionalist conservatism. I disagree with Dreher on this point, and believe all the sub-ideologies outlined above can be considered legitimately conservative. Nevertheless, the point here is that conservatives who happen to be participating in farmers markets are not simply jumping on the bandwagon of the latest fad, but that their participation is profoundly linked with their values. Moreover, these values, which link traditionalism and the alternative food movement, have long and complex roots, and have evolved considerably over time.

One farmer I spoke with seemed at first to be the clearest example of someone who held traditionalist conservative views. He believed strongly in the institution of marriage, natural moral laws which govern society and are necessary for constraining a free market economy, and the importance of community. He also had great respect for the wisdom of past agricultural practices and cultural norms, like women being the primary caregivers of children. Yet, he thought that these values didn't necessitate a romantic desire to return to some past golden age. Rather, these values could inspire new and better forms of farming and education. Thus, he struggled with labeling his own political identity:

> You know, it's fascinating. I think I would be labeled by people as extremely conservative but I feel I am in some ways an explorer. I mean, we're in some ways ahead of the pack. We're not following and trying to keep people back in the traditions of the past – so what does that make me? ...Forty years ago we

[136] Dreher, *Crunchy Cons*, xi.

> started raising things without chemicals. That was when people didn't know and didn't care for the most part. My father was actually the one who started us in that. We were at the vanguard of homeschooling, the vanguard of organic agriculture. How many people don't have television because they think it's going to have a corrupting effect on them? Does that make me ultra conservative or does that put me out in the lead? What is that? That's a liberal position – not to have television. Hmm. I don't know. I feel like I'm not trying to keep people in the paths of the past. I want to be a leader if at all possible.[137]

This statement shows that traditionalist conservative values were clearly motivators for people like this farmer, but that holding these values didn't make the person simply reactionary. Moreover, these values were not being used by people to proclaim their adherence to a strict totalizing ideology, but that they wrestled with how these values were connected with broader political ideas and discourses.

The critique of industrial and corporate dominated capitalism is where traditionalists like Kirk and countercultural leftists find some common ground. Kirk's view of nature, which dictates fundamental moral laws, leads him to skepticism of free market capitalism unfettered by these laws. Dreher says Kirk's view should also cause conservatives to question the conventional food system. He makes this point explicitly in his book *Crunchy Cons*. It's instructive to read his "manifesto" at the beginning of the book:

> 1. We are conservatives who stand outside the conservative mainstream; therefore, we can see things that matter more clearly.
>
> 2. Modern conservatism has become too focused on money, power, and the accumulation of stuff, and insufficiently concerned with the content of our individual and social character.
>
> 3. Big business deserves as much skepticism as big government.

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[137] Interview, Alexandria 4.

> 4. Culture is more important than politics and economics.
>
> 5. A conservatism that does not practice restraint, humility, and good stewardship—especially of the natural world—is not fundamentally conservative.
>
> 6. Small, Local, Old, and Particular are almost always better than Big, Global, New, and Abstract.
>
> 7. Beauty is more important than efficiency.
>
> 8. The relentlessness of media-driven pop culture deadens our senses to authentic truth, beauty, and wisdom.
>
> 9. We share Russell Kirk's conviction that "the institution most essential to conserve is the family."
>
> 10. Politics and economics won't save us; if our culture is to be saved at all, it will be by faithfully living by the Permanent Things, conserving these ancient moral truths in the choices we make in our everyday lives.[138]

As I mentioned in the introduction, Dreher believes buying local and organic food, a supposedly liberal phenomenon, didn't conflict with his traditionalist conservative beliefs, "it flowed naturally from them". Furthermore, he says that "Right now [in 2006], joining ... a local farmers' food co-op might be more authentically conservative than joining the Republican Party."[139] His manifesto clearly shows how traditionalist conservatives are motivated by each of the keys modes of thinking that I've identified for the alternative food movement.

The conservatives I spoke with were very forthcoming about their critiques of the conventional food system. They were mostly critical of agricultural corporations and political economic structures such as federal subsidies that have favored large

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[138] Dreher, *Crunchy Cons*, 1-2.
[139] Dreher, *Crunchy Cons*, x.

producers vs. small. Therefore, these critiques evoked a combination of direct democracy, populism, and progressivism. A conservative farmer in Alexandria lamented the increasing consolidation of farms over the last few decades and it's economic impact:

> It hurt our rural community's a lot. You know, there used to be farms about every 160 acres up to 400 acres. Now they farm thousands of acres. So there's a lot of people out of work because of that. I don't know, I don't think that was ever good for the country, the big operator....And these big hog operations. You know, farmers around here used to have few hogs and then some cattle. Now, most of them gone out of business because they can't keep up with these big outfits.[140]

Another conservative farmer in Alexandria specifically targeted Monsanto:

> Of course my family was here yesterday and we are all very organically minded people. The word Monsanto came up and we don't want anything [to do with them]. We were talking about seeds, and Monsanto is in for the profit to produce seeds and they're doing a very poor job of it. [141]

One conservative farmer in Roseau I interviewed was skeptical of libertarian arguments to remove government completely from the agricultural economy, but was also extremely critical of the way government has intervened to mostly benefit large producers. He was quite frustrated with the current status quo, and faulted both Democrats and Republicans:

> A farmer is always hopeful, no matter what his politics are. He's always thinking that it's gonna be better. But, sooner or later they all bang their heads against the wall; they either go broke or they quit. I used to drive around here when I was a kid in the...60's and 70's and you looked at all the building on the farmsteads. I mean, people were making some money. You drive around now, all you see is those same buildings falling down. It's not just here, it's in Nebraska. I've got relatives down in Nebraska, friends all over the country. Farming just isn't doing it. [In the] 60's and 70's farmers screamed, "you gotta get government out of farming." Well you see what's

[140] Interview, Alexandria 5
[141] Interview, Alexandria 6

> happened there....It's a welfare program and everybody should wake up and realize that. It's a program that gives us cheap food....
>
> But it's not for small producers, only your big producers. I went through a program one time, 10 years ago, that was supposed to help you out if you have an uninsurable crop [via private financial companies]....He offered me a check for $58. I told them to shove it up their ass. I mean it was an insult, an absolute insult....The tax code and everything are set up for the big guy. All the programs are set up – if you grow 100 acres of wheat well I guess you can tough it out if you lose your crop. If you grow 1000 acres, well oh my God, we better save you. Your one job is so much more important than those other 100 guys. [142]

Conservations often articulated a vision for a better food system that involved decentralization and education of consumers, citizens, and especially youth. The Alexandria farmer who was troubled by the consolidation of farms, thought that urban farming and gardening could be a way of democratizing the food system: "People should be encouraged to plant gardens. During WWII they had Victory Gardens, they should have more of that."[143] The same Alexandria farmer who was critical of Monsanto said that

> I'm hoping in the next few years that we're going to see a big change in the way people eat, because the schools are becoming interested. We've got to shift back to good food in schools [if] we're going to see a change in the way people eat. We'll probably slowly get rid of such people as Monsanto and find little companies that take their places. [144]

Yet another conservative farmer in Alexandria also thought renewed education about eating whole foods and teaching children about where food comes from is important. She took her own children to the farmers' market with her as part of their education:

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[142] Interview, Roseau 1
[143] Interview, Alexandria 5
[144] Interview, Alexandria 6

> We need to teach [children] *good* food to live... My kids took... Home Ec[onomics] classes, and I'm like, well that's OK, but can you really live on microwaved stuff? Because people are amazed at what my kids can do at their early age, and it's just because they're exposed to it, and lots of kids aren't exposed to, this is where food comes from.

Agrarianism and Alternative Economies

Again, these types of critiques of industrial capitalism and a call for decentralization of the agri-food system power are not complete aberrations or new phenomena for traditionalist conservatives. The intellectual history of traditionalism has intersected with agrarianism in complicated ways. Historian Douglas Hurt defines agrarianism as "the belief that farming is the best way of life and the most important economic endeavor. Agrarianism also implies that farmers willfully sought to avoid commercial agriculture and preferred a 'moral economy' in which they produced for subsistence purposed rather than the market and economic gain."[145] Agrarianism in America famously extends at least back to Jefferson and his idealization of the yeomen farmer: private landowners and agriculturalists and engaged citizens who were the foundation of democratic politics. Jefferson is a complex figure and given his actual views and the fact that he is today claimed by liberals, conservatives, radicals, and reformers, it's difficult to place him squarely within conservative traditionalist heritage.[146] However, early American figures who

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[145] R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994).
[146] Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

do more clearly fit, but are given less attention, are John Taylor (1753-1824) and John Randolph (1773-1833).

Both Randolph and Taylor glorified rural people and agriculture, excoriated urbanites and industrial capitalism. Taylor argued in his book *Arator* (1818) that in farming "the practice of almost every moral virtue is amply remunerated in the world, whilst is also the best surety for attaining the blessings of the next". They shared Jefferson's reverence for the yeomen farmer, but did not share his belief in equality and democracy. Randolph declared: "I am an aristocrat. I love liberty. I hate equality." He even rebuked Jefferson's claims in the hallowed Declaration of Independence: "That all men are born free and equal--I can never assent to, for the best of all reasons, because it is not true." Both men were also highly skeptical of centralized power, the federal government, taxes and the public debt, and were therefore strong advocates of states' rights and militias. While their critique of industrial capitalism makes them early traditionalists, these other views clearly make them early libertarians as well, again revealing the complex interplay of conservative ideas. All of these various positions led Randolph and Taylor to be strong supporters of southern plantation agriculture and of slavery. While they were certainly racists, believing blacks to be inherently inferior, this was not their only or even chief justification for slavery. They correctly pointed out that slavery existed in almost every society throughout recorded history, and firmly believed it was the foundation of civilization. Recent work by a number of Southern historians has revealed, in Allitt's summary, that Randolph, Taylor, and other "slave owners were not

shamefaced men doing what they knew was wrong but, rather, proud and honorable men doing what they genuinely believed was right, and that in matters of logic, history, tradition, and scripture, they often got the best of the argument."[147] With this last point, I am emphatically not trying to valorize or defend Randolph and Taylor's deplorable support of racism and slavery. I am simply trying to reveal the deeper nuances of their position as members of the traditionalist branch of conservatism, just as I am trying to reveal the deeper nuances of contemporary traditionalists.

Another group of prominent Southerners picked up this line of traditionalist thinking in the 1930's: The Southern (or Nashville) Agrarians. The Southern Agrarians were a group of intellectuals including professors, novelists, poets and journalists, many of whom worked at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Their most famous work is *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*[148] in which they condemned industrial society as "unnatural, unstable, and corrosive of tradition and virtue"[149] and obsessed with material wealth. They saw communism as equally bad as capitalism because both were systems of dominated by industrial wealth. John Crow Ransom, poet and English professor, argued Americans should remember the traditions of their European heritage, and the Civil War was not about slavery but a battle between "the industrial and commercial civilization of the North and the agrarian civilization of the South."

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[147] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 137.
[148] Twelve Southerners. *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. Louisiana State University Press, 1930.
[149] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 137.

Owsley and Robert Penn Warren, like Taylor and Randolph were unabashed racists. The held extremely biased views, believing that industrial jobs of the north were worse for blacks than southern farm jobs because at least farm work could provide them stability and eventual advancement. This belief completely ignored the oppressive reality of sharecropping and tenant farming, as described in Chapter 2.

Andrew Lytle, Yale-educated dramatist argued farming was the "panacea for all Southerners."[150] Farmers, moreover, should resist the temptation to become "progressive farmers,"[151] as government agencies and advertisers urged. They should not mechanize or industrialize their farms, which might look like the avenue to wealth but would actually mean giving themselves over to the enemies of farm life: the bankers, machinery salesmen, and mortgage brokers. After all, "a farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grown corn."[152]

Clearly, the Southern Agrarians held troubling, romantic, and inaccurate views. Yet, as historian Paul Murphy has argued, their critique of industrial capitalism was actually quite insightful.[153] Nevertheless, their positions are also rather paradoxical because they were intellectuals who lionized farming and the simple life. In light of this paradox, it's easy to dismiss them as hypocrites. While their dismissal on these grounds is relatively easy, dismissal of contemporary conservatives making similar political-economic arguments is less easy because they aren't necessarily academic theorists, but actual farmers.

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[150] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 139.
[151] Andrew Lytle."The Hand Tit," in Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand,* 205.
[152] Lytle, "The Hand Tit," 205.
[153] Paul V. Murphy. *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Lastly, placing the Southern Agrarians into their historical context reveals some intriguing congruence with both leftists of the 1930's and debates about farming and political-economy which have reverberated through to today. This congruence was revealed by sociologists Jess Gilbert and Steve Brown in an article they co-wrote in 1981.[154] While the Agrarians, as political conservatives, were critiquing the market forces of corporate capitalism, they were also responding to New Deal policies which were furthering these forces. At the same time, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), a labor union composed of poor sharecroppers who were motivated by socialist and Marxist ideals, were offering similar critiques of the dominant agricultural system. Moreover, both groups advocated land reform as the solution: the Agrarians promoted the redistribution of private property to small farmers; the STFU promoted the nationalization of farmland which could then be leased to small farmers. While the land reform proposals of each group were never implemented in any substantial way, FDR did create the Resettlement Administration, which for a short time engaged in a few land reform initiatives. Also, both groups supported (not without some criticism) a Congressional proposal called the Bankhead-Jones bill which called for certain reforms, and worked with the White House and members of Congress to try to get it passed. This episode is instructive for revealing the precedent of cross-ideological agreement over the root problems of the food system and cross-ideological engagement with policy initiatives. Lastly, Gilbert and Brown frame their article

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[154] Jess Gilbert and Steve Brown, "Alternative Land Reform Proposals in the 1930s: The Nashville Agrarians and the SouthernTenant Farmers' Union." *Agricultural History*, 55.4(1981): 351-369.

using a report written by Bob Berglund, the Secretary of Agriculture for President Carter, called *A Time to Chose*, also published in 1981. Berglund argues in the report that America's agri-food system was at key turning point, where the system could move towards putting more land, power and wealth in the hands of large land owners and corporations, or towards distributing that land, power and wealth more broadly. It happens that Berglund is from Roseau, MN and someone I interviewed about the farmers' market connected me to him, and we sat down for an interview. He said that the agri-food system is again at a turning point in 2011. He observed that enthusiasm for a more decentralized food system, and for organic farming had grown considerably since 1981, but Americans are still struggling with what kind of agri-food system they actually want.[155] The congruence of Southern Agrarians and the STFU is thus just as instructive in 2011 as it was in 1981 for this struggle.

Similar intriguing cross-ideological connections are found among an intellectual group called the Distributists. They were most active during the 1930's and briefly collaborated with Southern Agrarians. Their most prominent thinkers were both British Catholics: the author and essayist G.K Chesterton and the historian, writer, and member of Parliament Hillaire Belloc. Chesterton and Belloc's ideas would be translated into the American context by the historian Herbert Agar, who was affiliated with the Southern Agrarians.[156] The framework for these thinkers was a combination of egalitarian democracy and traditional Catholic morality. The

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[155] Interview, Roseau, Bob Berglund.
[156] Alan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement Toward Decentralist Thought in 20th Century America*. New Brunswick:Transaction Press, 2000.

basic position was that "political democracy required economic democracy" and the best way to achieve this was broad, decentralization of private property as opposed to industrial capitalism which consolidated wealth, land, and forced the masses into being "wage-slaves." The high point of Distributism came with the publication in 1936 of *Who Owns America?,* a collection of essays edited by Agar and the Southern Agrarian Allen Tate. Critics lambasted the volume for being too utopian, and distributism was further wrecked by Seward Collins', a key supporter, embrace of fascism.[157]

Distributist ideas, while certainly extremely marginalized, have not completely disappeared. The historian Allan Carlson has been one of the more vocal 21st century revivalists of these ideas, having published ten books exploring American history, society, and political economy through a distributist lens. His 2000 book T*he New Agrarian Mind: The Movement Towards Decentralist Thought in Twentieth Century America* has been a useful intellectual history of agrarianism and traditionalist conservatism for this project. Carlson is the former president and now key contributor to the Howard Center, a small conservative think tank located in Rockford Illinois which focuses on "family, religion, and society." The Howard Center website has published a number of Carlson's lectures which emphatically promote distributism for the 21st century, which he claims to be a viable "third way" vis a vis capitalism and socialism. In an attempt to rebut the critique that this political economic system is utopian and without actual policies, he offers a number of proposals including:

[157] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 141.

- "To break up monopoly corporations, legally support the extension of profit sharing and ownership to workers' associations."
- "restore the small shop, use differential taxation against chain or "big box" stores (aiming at no more than a dozen shops per corporation)"
- " redirect farm subsidies ($20 Billion annually in the USA) away from large agri-businesses toward the encouragement of small, general purpose farms (with the quid pro quo that families receiving assistance would open their properties to visiting school children, and so on)"[158]

These proposals are ones that are also advocated for by those on the political left. Enthusiasm for "worker associations" or worker-owned cooperative is something that neo-Marxists and leftist post-modernization especially share with distributists. A striking example is the common praise among these thinkers for the Mondragon Cooperative in Spain. The Mondragon Cooperative was founded in 1956 by the Catholic priest Jose Maria Arizmendiarrieta, and has grown into "perhaps the most successful and well-recognized complex of worker-owned industrial, retail, service, and support cooperatives in the world."[159] The cooperative is composed of over 100 associated companies and employs 83,000 people, 85% of whom are worker-owners.[160] *The Distributist Review*, an online journal based in New York with academics, theologians, journalists and businesspeople as contributors, has published a number of articles promoting Mondragon.[161] The Spanish cooperative is a focal point and hopeful example for leftist economic geographers J.K. Gibson-

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158 Carlson, Alan. "Neither Capitalism Nor Socialism: The Quest For 'Third Way' Economies". The Howard Center, March 2011. http://www.profam.org/docs/acc/thc.acc.110323.3way.uva.htm Accessed Sept. 15th 2011.

159 J.K. Gibson-Graham. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minnapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2006, 102.

160 Mondragon Corporation 2011. Home Page. http://www.mcc.es/ Accessed August 1st 2011.

161 Distributist Review, "Post Tagged with:' Mondragon'",http://distributistreview.com/mag/tag/mondragon/ Accessed August 1st, 2011.

Graham in their book *A Post-Capitalist Politics*.[162] Likewise, the Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright features Mondragon as functioning alternative to industrial capitalism in his book *Envisioning Real Utopias*.[163]

Traditionalist conservative thought has clearly evolved over time while maintaining consistent critiques of industrial capitalism. Its relationship to agrarianism has also evolved significantly. As stated earlier, agrarian thought can be traced back to at least Jefferson's ideal of virtuous yeomen farmer, which was perpetuated by notable figures like William Jennings Bryan and Liberty Hyde Bailey, who were in many ways anti-urban.[164] Hurt argues that pairing it with populism and direct democracy has created an "agricultural fundamentalism" or a "belief in the social, economic, and political superiority or rural citizenry."[165] Again, this is a myth that can clearly be debunked by looking at the history of farming in the South as discussed here in Chapter 2, where commodity farmers operated as businessman and sharecroppers were poor and oppressed. Likewise, in the West, railroads, speculators bought up most of land, and homesteaders had to engage in commercial agricultural to survive.

I think Hurt is right, that prior agrarian thinking has perpetuated the myth that farmers are especially virtuous and that they are not engaged in capitalist enterprise. That's not really the position, however, that the contemporary conservative farmers I talked to are espousing. It's not primarily a romantic

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[162] Gibson-Graham. *A Postcapitalist Politics.*
[163] Wright, Erik Olin, *Envisioning Real Utopias*. (Brooklyn: Verso, 2010).
[164] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 72.
[165] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 73.

reinterpretation of a past to which they want to return. Their argument is really that a different kind, a less industrialized, centralized, environmentally detrimental form of farming is possible, and that people are doing it. Not all farmers are doing it; in fact most farmers are not. Furthermore, not all farmers would switch if they could. Nevertheless, their argument that the creation of or at least a movement towards a "moral economy" would be a good thing, and that it's possible. By "moral economy" I don't mean the same thing as Hurt - it would not be simply for subsistence gain. It would be for commercial profit but in a way that's more sustainable and just, like for-profit CSA farms, and certain farmers' markets. For instance, a conservative farmer in Alexandria made it clear that he believed in a decentralized food system, direct connections between farmers and consumers, and using practices that were as ecologically sustainable as possible (such as avoiding GMO's and certain chemical sprays), he was not perpetuating an agrarian mythology: "I will say this to anyone who uses GMO corn or sprays, I understand. It's hard to make a living and not fit into the box [of conventional agriculture].... I could be a purist and raise my children without any chemicals, using horses, but I cannot pay real estate taxes with cabbages. I have to make money."[166] Lastly, while agrarianism may have been anti-urban in the past, if contemporary traditionalist conservatives could be considered agrarian, it's more difficult to argue they are anti-urban. The farmers I interviewed were happily selling to urban people and were promoting urban farming and gardening.

Science, Technology and Environmentalism

[166] Interview, Alexandria 4.

Concerns about modern science and technology, as I've said are not new to traditionalist thought. Political theorists have argued that certain elements of conservative thought are indeed consistent with environmentalism, if not actually more consistent than various elements of liberal thought. Andrew Dobson argues that what he calls "ecologism", or environmentalism that espouses radical transformation of society, is primarily in opposition to "industrialism", which is a kind of "super-ideology" focused on material wealth, centralization of power, and scientific reductionism.[167] Opposition, as I've demonstrated, to "industrialism" emerges from both liberal and conservative thought, and thus environmentalism can and does transcend the conventional political divide. John Gray, himself a conservative political theorist, argues that "Green thought and conservative philosophy converge at several crucial points, the very points at which they most diverge from fundamentalist liberalism." These "three deep affinities" are:

> [1] that both conservatism and Green theory see the life of humans in a multi-generational perspective that distinguishes them from liberalism and socialism alike. Liberalism with its disabling fiction of society as a contract among strangers, is a one-generational philosophy....[2] the primacy of the common life. Both conservative and Green thinkers repudiate the shibboleth of liberal individualism, the sovereign subject, the autonomous agent whose choices are the origin of all that has value....Human individuals are not natural data, such as pebbles or apples, but are artefacts of social life, cultural and historical achievements....[3] the danger of novelty; in particular, the sorts of innovation that go with large-scale social (and technological) experimentation.[168]

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[167] Andrew Dobson. *Green Political Thought*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1995.

[168] John Gray. *Beyond the New Right: Markets, government and the common environment*. London: Routledge , 1993, 136-137.

Gray's first point can be traced back to Edmund Burke who famously said that society is a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."[169]

Several of the conservatives I spoke to expressed skepticism about modern science and technology and their connection to the conventional food system. A conservative farmer in Madison said

> We've always questioned the use of chemicals. One thing I questioned years and years ago when insecticides were common to be on with the corn planter to protect the corn crop from insects eating it, the question in my mind was, OK, now insect eats that, it's going to kill the insect. But we can take that same corn plant and feed it to a steer and eat the steer. There's something wrong here with that idea.[170]

His customers also had similar concerns about the effect of chemical accumulation from the food system on their health. They "want to know in detail how the animal was raised, where it was processed, what's done with it. The more problems with sickness they've had in their family with meat from the common food chains, the more questions they will ask because they realize how serious it is in affecting their families' health."[171]

The effects of agricultural chemicals were also troubling to a slightly conservative farmer who had recently transitioned to growing organically:

> I really like the fact that we aren't using chemicals and things. You see so much cancer in this area. I think a lot of it has to do with the agriculture and all the sprays. My own family right now, well my Dad died of prostate cancer and then now my two brothers in their fifties were just diagnosed with prostate cancer and they've both been big farmers and doing everything all

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[169] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*
[170] Interview, Madison 3
[171] Interview, Madison 3

> these years. I like to think that we have this spot that is basically, hopefully, somewhat chemical free.[172]

Intriguingly, this farmer struggled with how these concerns were connected to her political engagement. She said she and her husband were conservative when it came to religious beliefs, and that she leaned libertarian on fiscal issues. But environmental conservation was very important to them, and thus navigating how to vote was difficult:

> I have a lot of Democratic beliefs but I claim to be Republican, so I don't know how that goes. We're a little confused!...I know Obama is big into environment, and conservation, and sustainable energy and all that. So I mean we're really on board with all that stuff. But we still do believe in capitalism. I don't know, we're not real big politicians.[173]

Conservative consumers in Roseau saw the need for environmental regulation on toxins or potential toxins. This belief, however, was not simply a concern about their own personal health but linked to broader concerns about a culture and economy focused on material wealth and excessive consumption:

> R3a: "America is so interested in that dollar we forego what is good for somebody because of the business....We do need regulation. Not just on growing, but on the packaging of things....I do want to buy things in glass, I do not want to buy things in plastic....First of all, I think glass is healthier and recyclable....Plastic leaches."
>
> R3b: "I don't consider myself a tree-hugger, and a real strong environmentalist but in recent years we're forced to evaluate more and more, are we doing things wrong, and are there better ways to do things? Are we living in excess? Are we eating too much?"[174]

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[172] Interview, Roseau 3
[173] Interview, Roseau 3
[174] Interview, Roseau 3

Environmental values, the use of agricultural chemicals, and organic agricultural practices were clearly important to many of the conservatives I spoke to, and each of them negotiated these things a little differently. I had an intriguing conversation with a bee farmer in the Roseau area about organic farming. He wasn't completely comfortable with the label "conservative", but instead just called himself a "Republican". His primary concerns as a farmer was supporting political and agricultural policies that would be amenable to his business. He also expressed, however, a deep fascination and appreciation of bees and their role in pollination. Both of these reasons motivated him to support organic farming practices, and question the practice of genetically modifying crops with embedded insecticides:

> Sprays are never good when you include bees in that mix. Even an herbicide when a plane flies over and sprays - if a bee is in that path they are done. If we can eliminate sprays – you've probably heard of colony collapse. I believe it stems from these seeds that have been genetically altered to have the pesticides in them. Some of the other products that are also systemic that they can put in the ground, comes up through the plant, it weakens the bee hive. You don't see it immediately but it weakens their immune system.[175]

When I asked him if he's like to see organic practices used more broadly, he said yes but was concerned that if America relied too much on organic agriculture it wouldn't be able to produce enough food to feed people. I told him that many others shared a similar concern, but that small organic farms have actually been able to produce a significant amount of food. I cited Troy Farm's ability to feed 150 families throughout the Wisconsin growing season on just 5 organic acres (including fallowed areas), and he was amazed, simply saying "Wow". The point here is that he seemed very open to learning about alternative farming techniques. As a bee farmer he was

[175] Interview, Roseau 2

part of national lobbying organizations to encourage state and federal government to encourage more organic practices. As someone who votes Republican and would be considered a small businessman, he would be bring a unique perspective to the alternative food movement if others were willing to engage with him.

Organic farming, as Julie Guthman has shown, is quite complex.[176] The advent of industrial organic farming, especially in California, and the somewhat lax definition used by the USDA for certification make organic less of a clear "alternative" to the conventional food system. The conservatives I spoke with, however, were often aware of some of these complexities. A conservative farmer in Alexandria, for instance, argued that true organic practices were much more holistic than portrayed by USDA definitions, the media, and consumers: "To me, the no spray is just a very minor part of the organic. It's the treating of the soil, how we rotate crops and all this sort of thing. Rather than...the no spray is what people think about."[177] Similarly, recent scholarly work has illuminated the problem with thinking that "local food" can be a panacea, and that defining local is a considerably difficult task. A conservative farmer in Madison recognized these problems and revealed he thought creating more localized food systems was important, but what that system will look like will have to be negotiated.

> Local food is different to everybody. Define local – is it within a mile or within the state? I see that's common at the famers market' – what's local to one [consumer is not local to the next [consumer]. The farmers, it depends on what they are raising, but they are raising a variety of stuff themselves....I sometimes question when you see them trucking this or that over a couple states, when I know they are going by thousands of other stores, or producers,

[176] Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams*.
[177] Interview, Alexandria 6

> or factories, or whatever that are growing or manufacturing the same product.[178]

He was not opposed to buying products from farther away or even abroad, such as coffee, but thought that emphasizing local food would help consumers and producers work on conserving energy, and building relationships.

More Reflective Than Reactionary

The acknowledgment of complexity regarding organic practices, environmental issues, and local food was emblematic of a general tendency towards self-reflection, humility, and openness towards education, dialogue and learning among the conservatives I interviewed. The impression I got from these interviews was quite different than the portrayal among agri-food scholars as clearly reactionary, nativist, and generally not reflective. For instance, a conservative farmer in Alexandria said that she comes to the farmers' market because "I like to come and be with the people and talk with the people, I mean, even just the other growers, and the customers. And with my kids, I think it teaches them to relate to lots and lots of different types of people...our views aren't right, our views aren't wrong , but other people can think, and that can be right too."[179] While he was clearly angry and frustrated about America's current political economic system, a conservative farmer in Roseau didn't believe it was necessarily the result of clear malicious intent by the powers that be. In other words, he wasn't simply clinging to a simplistic populist idea of conspiracy, but rather reflecting on growing economic inequality and the disconnection between upper class elites and middle and working class people. I

[178] Interview, Madison 3.
[179] Interview, Alexandria 2

asked him if he thought politicians, members of the media, and corporate executives were all out to "screw the little guy" and he responded:

> Well, I don't know if they are out to screw the little guy. It's just that some of these people...are telling us what we're supposed to be doing and have no idea anymore what it takes to make a living. Their idea of a poor person is someone who makes a quarter of a million dollars a year. Well, what population of the country makes over a quarter million dollars a year? About 4 percent? It's very small.[180]

One conservative farmer in Alexandria clearly showed his ability to critique without simply being reactionary. He told me that he found mainstream society and the conventional agri-food system to be repugnant in many ways, and that he was trying hard to forge an alternative path. I asked him if he and his family ever considered living a kind of hermetic life, disconnected as much as possible from society. He responded:

> We had thought one time of trying to do that. But, no, we want to make a difference for good as much as we can and live with people, live in the world that we were put into. What is the purpose for living? This gets down to politics or even deeper. It isn't to isolate ourselves, it's to integrate ourselves and to be - to make a difference for good.[181]

He also displayed a remarkable appreciation for different perspectives, and potential flaws in his own perspective. I asked him if he had found a community of people that held similar beliefs, or were farming similarly. He said

> It's an interesting question. First of all I think there are people doing it better than we are, and I'm not trying to say we're doing it the best. Secondly, we find common ground in many areas. There are a lot of people who are farming similar to us because they don't want to pollute the earth, but they're not all coming from the same perspective. I do it as a Christian, a follower of the teachings of Christ, of Jesus. But I have common ground with many who are not professing Christians, there are just eager to try to save the Earth. In

[180] Interview, Roseau 1
[181] Interview, Alexandria 4.

> other areas I have more common ground with a lot of home-schooling families, and not all of them are interested in organic agriculture, but they're concerned raising their kids right. So in each area I find a group of people that I have camaraderie with. We can talk and enjoy doing it. That's fascinating to me. We're not all working out of the same framework in our thinking.[182]

Moreover, he was not judgmental of those who didn't farm the way he did. He understood there were systemic forces at work that made it difficult for individuals to change their practices:

> I think the system of agriculture may reflect the devaluing that has already taken place in our society. It doesn't create it, it reflects it. And I know that there are many farmer-friends, neighbors - they're stuck. They're trying to make a living. They're not huge farmers, they're not the huge conglomerates that maybe you're referring to. They're just trying to make a living any way they can and I have great respect for them. I don't like the system of agriculture that it's gotten to be, and I wish there was a change. If there is a devaluing of people in agriculture I think it's because there's a devaluing of people in the world in general, at large.[183]

Conservative Fusion and Fission

Finally, I'd like to make some concluding remarks about what currently unites the four disparate groups of conservatives, and how the political landscape in America might be undergoing an important transition. There are clearly tensions and even outright conflicts between these different sub ideologies. Ayn Rand's libertarian argument in defense of individual selfishness as the greatest good is very much at odds with traditionalist critiques of individualism. Likewise, libertarian arguments against coercion by the state in private lives is in conflict with the Religious Right's desire to impose their vision of personal morality. Therefore it is not fixed principles or policy positions which unite conservatives, but rather a

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[182] Interview, Alexandria 4.
[183] Interview, Alexandria 4.

certain disposition or attitude. While this disposition, which I will discuss shortly, provides underlying cohesion, there are actually very specific historical efforts responsible for contemporary political unity among conservatives. In the 1950's, prior to the cohesion of neoconservativism and the rise of the Religious Right, the dominant strains of conservatism were libertarianism, traditionalism, and anticommunism (many adherents of whom would become neoconservatives later on). Anticommunists were simply people who were making fervent arguments against communism. While Joe MacCarthy is the most infamous, vengeful, and Manichean example, others like Whitaker Chambers and Max Eastman, former communists themselves, offered more nuanced and sober arguments.[184] Anticommunism, traditionalism, libertarianism were initially united by something called fusionism.

The beginnings of fusionism were sowed by William F. Buckley Jr., who rose to prominence with his precocious polemic against liberalism in the academy, *God and Man at Yale.* He went on to found the magazine *National Review*, which featured all types of conservatives and presented a united front against the political left and center. Buckley tended libertarian but managed to appeal to traditional values as well. While Buckley was the mastermind, Frank Meyer, contributor to National Review and former communist, performed the specific mental gymnastics for formulating fusionism. He argued that

> free-market libertarians and traditionalists, actually needed each other and should work together. Free-market economics, he reasoned, generates wealth and prevents the concentration of too much power in the state. Its supporters

[184] Alitt, *The Conservatives*, 172-173.

> are right to be concerned about protecting individual freedom. But they ought not to regard freedom as an end in itself--men must use their freedom to strive after virtue. This was a point the traditionalists understood well, but traditionalists had weaknesses too--they often seemed willing to accept irrationality and to settle for authoritarian government, forgetting that only people who are free can pursue virtue. Each group must therefore educate the other. That traditionalists and libertarians were in fact cooperating in the growing movement showed that they already had some appreciation for this insight, made all the more logical by their shared anticommunism.[185]

While he did get critiqued by both libertarians and traditionalists, fusionism was generally accepted by conservatives. A member of President Reagan's staff once remarked that fusionism meant "utilizing libertarian means in a conservative society for traditionalist ends."[186]

In America, only since the efforts of Buckley and the National Review in the 1950's have people been labeling themselves as "conservatives" and talking about conservatism as a movement. But the conservative disposition has been around since the colonial period. As Allitt argues "conservatism is, first of all, an attitude to social and political change that looks for support to the ideas, beliefs, and habits of the past and puts more faith in the lessons of history than in the abstractions of political philosophy."[187] Their attitude consists of a deep sense that humans are fallible and imperfect and thus conflict and war are inevitable. Likewise, societal planning is doomed to fail due to unintended consequences and likely lead to tyranny by elitist planners and technocrats. As the British conservative Lord Acton remarked, "absolute power corrupts absolutely." Conservatives are not opposed to change or social reform, but believe many policies pursued in the name of reform are actual

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[185] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 179.
[186] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 237.
[187] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 2.

harbingers of chaos and moral decay. Moreover, reform efforts should be guided by the wisdom of ancestors and tradition more than political theory. Because of this attitude, conservatives have often been reactive to reform efforts rather than proactive.

While I agree with Allitt, and think this is a an accurate portrayal of the general conservative disposition and that there is a richness of thought within the ideology, I also think there may be irreconcilable differences, especially in terms of political economy, within its current manifestation. The fusionism of Frank Meyer was really about crafting a narrative that would allow disparate conservatives to comfortably collaborate, rather than developing an actual theoretical breakthrough. The contradictions did not disappear, but were simply pushed into the background, while the genuinely shared goals of combating communism, liberalism, and the growth of the federal government were pushed to the forefront. Allitt draws out another contradiction, noting that libertarian conservatives seek to preserve the existing economic order which is capitalist, but that capitalism is one of the world's most powerful forces of innovation and rapid change. While this broad conservative consensus, which has become the dominant paradigm in American politics since Reagan, is deeply contradictory, I don't believe it invalidates all conservative ideas or positions. Furthermore, I think it's clear that many conservatives are themselves critical of the broad fusionist consensus because it squelches nuance in their own position. Contemporary examples would be Rod Dreher, David Frum, David Brooks, and even the Tea Party.

I think many liberals and leftists have, however, completely dismissed conservatism either because of the contradictions in the broad consensus, or because of some of the more extreme voices. When conservative identity was first being explicitly articulated in the 1950's liberals vehemently attacked these efforts, most notably in Daniel Bell's collection *The New American Right*.[188] They saw the movement as a pathetic disease rather than a serious intellectual political program: "it needed to be diagnosed rather than interpreted."[189] This attitude of psychological diagnosis vs. intellectual engagement is still evident in contemporary work by liberal thinkers like George Lakoff.[190] It's also evident in the food literature I outlined in the introduction. These quick dismissals of conservative thought and ideas have been detrimental to liberals and leftists, as a significant portion of American public continues to be convinced by conservative narratives. I think it is also to the detriment of researchers trying to better understand alternative food participation.

I believe a more nuanced approach to conservatism is to try and understand it's complex sub-ideologies, and engage more fully with some of the conservative voices who are dissenting from the simplistic dominant narratives, and are offering cogent critiques of current political and economic system. Many of these voices come from the traditionalist conservative tradition, but have been largely marginalized by other conservatives and ignored by food scholars. Young echoes Allitt's insight

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[188] Daniel Bell. *The New American Right,* New York: Criterion Books, 1955.
[189] Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 183.
[190] See George Lakoff. *Don't Think Of An Elephant! How Democrats And Progressives Can Win: Know Your Values And Frame The Debate.* New York: Chelsea Green, 2004.

above, delving into the deeper realms of American intellectual history to explain this marginalization and ignorance:

> The status-quo that American conservatives are concerned to protect is deeply involved with liberal capitalism. My argument is that American conservatism, for all its occasional insights, has never quite succeeded in escaping the problems inherent in preserving a social and political order with such a high liberal content. In particular, the warm embrace of capitalism, one of the most powerful agents for change in the modern world, constantly threatens conservatism with intellectual incoherence. It is difficult to build an autonomous conservatism on the basis of a theory in which change is an essential part of the social order.[191]

Thus, traditionalist conservatism has been mostly peripheral in American history. But Young also ponders whether America is at the cusp of a fundamental political and economic shift, where the dominance of classic liberalism and laissez-faire capitalism as manifestations of modernity and their emphasis on progress, growth, and enlightenment science may be waning. This is obviously a deep question which has garnered much spilt ink and that I am not attempting to answer in any satisfactory way here. Rather, I am arguing here that it's a question that is lurking deep within the motivations of the alternative food movement, sometimes becoming overt and sometimes remaining subtle. Ultimately, while critiques of the conventional food system come in many forms, they are rooted in critiques of the modern paradigm of classic 18th and 19th century liberal politics, massive industrialism, scientific reductionism, and laissez-faire economics.

All this is to say that if traditionalist conservatism has never been able to gather much momentum because of the dominance of this modern paradigm, if the paradigm is starting to crack then traditionalist conservatism may have an opening.

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[191] Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism*, 236.

This opening would have to be associated with a new paradigm, which a plethora of intellectuals and activists have been trying to present for many decades, including traditionalist conservatives, Marxists, postmodernists, and environmentalists (at least those who are theoretically inclined). While I certainly don't claim to have any legitimate or systematic argument for what this new paradigm might look like, this project is about exploring both intellectual and practical efforts to create a new paradigm, especially in the realm of food and agriculture. It is in this spirit of exploration that I'll examine in the following chapter the possibility of cross-ideological dialogue, and the role of the farmers' market in that dialogue.

CHAPTER 4: PROSPECTS FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

The modes of thinking outlined in the Introduction which are central to alternative food initiatives are clearly motivators for farmers' market participants across the political spectrum, and each person I interviewed enlisted these modes in their own unique way. While this uniqueness revealed disagreements and differences, it did not overshadow considerable common ground. Both self-identified liberals and conservatives expressed a strong belief in the need for grass-roots, populist efforts to transform the food system, and to some degree the wider political-economic system, to make it more democratic and decentralized. Some linked this belief to antipathy towards wealthy farmers and landowners and large agricultural corporations who they saw as holding too much power. Often this antipathy was linked to a support for progressive policy initiatives that would eliminate federal subsidies for large, monocrop farms or at least redirect them towards smaller, diversified farms. Certain farmers and consumers were less quick to attack large farmers and agribusiness, primarily because they were concerned small, diversified, organic farms wouldn't be able to produce enough food to feed either America's population or the world's population. Nevertheless, this latter group still thought more support could be given to encourage the proliferation of small farms and organic practices and initiatives like farmers' markets.

Everyone I spoke with mentioned that the farmers' market is an important place for relationship building between farmers and consumers, and for educating

each other about food and farming. Communitarian values of trust, accountability, and familiarity were significant themes for people on both the left and the right. These communitarian values, however, didn't dictate an especially exclusionary stance. For instance, several of the self-identified conservatives I talked to said their religious beliefs and communitarian values motivated them to care for their neighbors in local communities, but also people who were in distant countries and marginalized populations like people in prisons.

Environmental values and some sense of land stewardship, conservation, concern for animal and human health was common across the political divide as well. For some, these values were central in their lives, but no one I spoke to held a dogmatically eco-centric viewpoint. In other words, many people recognized that certain economic and political structures made it hard to balance environmental values with making a living. Lastly, some degree of skepticism about wholesale acceptance of modern science and technology was expressed by everyone, some more fervently than others. The point is that both liberals and conservatives were interested in asking important questions about the role of science and technology in our food system, and not blindly accepting the status quo.

These modes of thinking are incredibly dynamic, and I'm in no way arguing that there is consensus among farmers' market participants or that consensus should be a goal. Rather, my interviews revealed that there is, contrary to much popular and scholarly opinion, considerable common ground about deeply held values across political perspectives, a shared sense that there are serious problems with the

conventional food system, and willingness to explore some of the associated complexities of these problems. Now that it's clear that these key modes of thinking, which animate participation in farmers' markets and the alternative food movement more broadly, are shared across the liberal-conservative divide, a few important questions arise. One of the initial hypotheses of this project was that the farmers' markets served as a kind of public forum for people from opposing political viewpoints to dialogue and try to understand each other's positions better through the medium of food. In other words, the farmers' market was a site of deliberative democracy.

Before explaining the basic principles, conditions, and goals of deliberative democracy, I want to argue why investigating whether the farmers' market is a site deliberative democracy is worthwhile. As already stated, part of the justification is the search for leverage points or "keystones" [192] for social, political, and economic action to solve some of the problems with the conventional food system. If the farmers' market is to be a potential leverage point for political action, it has to be seen within the broader context of the current American political atmosphere, which I would argue is increasingly polarized and characterized by policy gridlock. While there is some disagreement among political scientists about the degree and manner of polarization in America, [193] there is considerable evidence that Americans have become increasing divided and segmented politically in recent decades. Futhermore, there is mounting evidence that Americans are geographically polarized. Political

[192] Gillespie et al. "Farmers' Markets as Keystones in Rebuilding Local and Regional Food Systems".
[193] Morris Fiorina. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Pearson, 2005.

scientists and political geographers have discovered trends that go beyond overly simplistic red state vs. blue state characterizations. Evidence has shown that political balkanization is happening at smaller scales: between counties, between urban cores and suburbs, between metropolitan and rural areas, and even between neighborhoods within cities. One key reason for this balkanization is population mobility. Migrants within the U.S. are not necessarily attracted towards new locations because they want to live among people who share their political affiliations. Migrants are instead looking for specific social and economic amenities, in other words they are looking for a place where people share their lifestyle. This lifestyle is often interconnected with a political worldview, and thus migrants tend to increase political homogenization of the locales where they move.[194] Before doing my interviews, I surmised that the farmers' market might serve as a location that countered some of this geographic polarization, by, for instance, engaging conservative rural farmers from outside Dane County and liberal urban consumers from within Dane County in deliberative democracy. I thought I might also find evidence that while voting preferences and certain political positions may differ significantly between a "liberal" city like Madison and a "conservative" small town like Roseau, there would be common perspectives on problems and solutions to food system. If these perspectives on the food system were being linked by participants to

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[194]See James Gimpel and Jason E. Schuknecht. *Patchwork Nation: Sectionalism and Political Change in American Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003; W. H Frey. "The New Geography of Population Shifts: Trends towards Balkanization." In R. Farley, ed., *State of the Union: America in the 1990's*. Vol.2. Russell Sage: New York, 1995; and Bill Bishop. *The Big Sort: Why The Clustering of America Is Tearing Us Apart*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2008.

broader political positions, then interactions at the farmers' market might be counteracting polarizing trends. Therefore, again, the farmers' market might serve as a leverage point for escaping political gridlock and for transforming the food system through political action.

What I found was that: 1) the farmers' market does not serve as a site of overt deliberative democracy among the participants I interviewed for a variety of reasons; 2) I did find that certain modes of thinking and approaches to food and farming were shared across ideological divides and in different geographic areas (i.e. rural small town of Roseau and urban neighborhood of Madison), but determining how this common ground might be leveraged by political activists is more complicated than I previously thought because of the relationship between political dialogue and political activism.

One reason the farmers' market was not serving as an overt site for deliberative democracy was that many people had never considered food or farming to be political. For instance, when I asked a conservative farmer in Alexandria how important her political beliefs were to the way she farmed, she said "I guess I've never even thought about them in that way"[195] and laughed respectfully over how strange she thought the question was. A Roseau customer who identified herself as "moderate" or "slightly liberal" had to process her thoughts out loud when I asked if her political beliefs influenced the way she purchased food, indicating she hadn't ever considered the connection before: "I don't know...I don't know if it really affects it. It might....I don't know. I'm not sure if it has any effect on what I purchase or

[195] Interview: Alexandria 2

not."[196] One conservative farmer in Madison was much more adamant: "I think [consumers] go to the farmers' marketto buy food, not to buy politics."[197]

Perceiving this disconnect seemed partly the result of a narrow definition of politics, which many people implicitly defined as overt activities like voting, campaigning, and visible action by elected representatives or government workers. The conservative Madison farmer above clarified his answer by saying that "If [consumers] are working a government job they leave those issues at the office if they can. Probably the greatest thing or most common thing I would see in the line of politics is a candidate needing nomination papers signed; they'll be at the farmers' market." Likewise, the conservative farmer from Alexandria mentioned above, said later in the interview when I asked her how more people might get involved in the market:

> This is funny, now maybe this is political, I would like to see the city get more involved with the market, so I suppose that is political, huh? I mean that does surprise me that they're not as involved. But I mean over the years, I've been doing this 14 years up here...Just the fact that they have a place here, and they put up signs...but I mean seriously, 14 years ago they could have cared less.[198]

This quotation also reveals the fact that while many of these participants initially never thought of food and farming as political, it became clear through our conversation that they did consider food and farming as at least indirectly connected through certain personal values, public policies, or various modes of thinking outlined in this project. One extremely liberal shopper from Alexandria said:

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[196] Interview: Roseau 5
[197] Interview: Madison 3
[198] Interview, Alexandria 2.

> I've never thought how I purchase food as a political issue, so that's a new concept for me...because I'm not consciously thinking politically when I'm shopping. But I guess, in a way maybe I do because I refuse to shop at Walmart....and it's because I am upset with their political policies, the way the treat their employees, their benefits program, what they do in small communities, to come in and then push out the small business owners.[199]

A pair of conservative farmers who were husband and wife demonstrated this dynamic as they talked in succession when I asked how important their political beliefs were to the way they farmed:

> I don't think political has anything to do with the way we do it.
>
> Well, I guess we are conservationists – whichever party is more into that. We're interested in sustainability.
>
> That would make you a Democrat then.
>
> Well, I have a lot of Democratic beliefs but I claim to be Republican, so I don't know how that goes [laughs] We're a little confused!"

Therefore, if a significant number of people weren't even making political connections to what's happening at the farmers' market, a subsequent set of questions emerge: are politics being *actively* negotiated in any way at these markets? In other words, were participants thinking about the farmers' marketas a 'keystone' or leverage point for political deliberation or action? Or do they simply see the farmers' market as a way to act out their personal political values or modes of thinking without any impact on others? First of all, not one of the people interviewed said they were having overt political conversations at the farmers' market, either because it never occurred to them or they avoided the topic. So, again, there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that the farmers' market is a kind of formal space

[199] Interview: Alexandria 3

for deliberative democracy. But politics did play an important latent role. When first asked, most (both vendors and consumers) said because they'd never actually discussed politics they thought that consumers, no matter their political position came to the farmers' market for the same basic reason: to buy and sell fresh, high quality food. The implication here is that because the farmers' market is essentially about the buying and selling of fresh and high-quality food, it's an apolitical space. But some more interesting responses were elicited in two kinds of circumstances: 1) when I reminded an interviewee that they acknowledged they come to the farmers' marketbecause of more complex values than just the buying and selling of fresh, high quality food, and asked if others might also; and 2) when I asked certain vendors who identified themselves as strongly liberal or conservative why a farmer from the opposite end of the spectrum would sell at the farmers' market. Under the first circumstance, an extremely liberal farmer in Madison associated "conservative" with people who were largely upper income people and went to church regularly, but acknowledged this association was based on stereotypes and not individuals he talked to. He thought there were probably no conservatives at Madison's East Side farmers' market, but he imagined that another Madison area market was frequently patronized by conservative consumers based on observations: "It was on a Sunday and everybody came right after church. They drove up in their big Cadillac's and SUV's. I mean, if I had to guess - I can't remember any actual interaction that would confirm those stereotypes."[200] When I asked him why he thought conservatives would be drawn to the farmers' market he responded:

[200] Interview: Madison 2

> Good question, what are they doing there? I don't know, I can only think, my guess, I have no idea, if you're politically conservative I don't see any reason why you don't still like community. I never met one, but [laughs at this joke]....I can only imagine they still like the community gathering aspect of it. My guess is that the economic model is not as important to them.... They're after that product. I'm sure conservative people have fun too, in their own way. [laughs at this joke]"

His jokes about conservatives were good-natured and respectful, but he acknowledged he had a lack of understanding about the full range of conservative values and modes of thinking. I told him later in the interview that I met several conservatives who were highly critical of large agri-business corporations and he was quite surprised. A moderate or slightly liberal consumer in Roseau expressed similar sentiments, saying "Conservatives wouldn't bother to do something like that [attend a farmers market]" because conservatives were interesting in supporting big business vs. small business.[201]

Some responses were much more clearly critical. I heard farmers from both sides of the political spectrum accusing farmers on the other side of being solely motivated by profit, which is clearly a false generalization, as I've shown in previous chapters. Here is an exchange with a conservative farmer in Alexandria:

> AD: Why do you think they [liberals] farm the way they do, they sell or buy at the farmers' market? What motivates them?
>
> A6: Well, I'm sure - some of them are doing it for the income. There's just there to see how much they can sell and get - just their philosophy. But they do have a good product and everything - but they're not thinking about: I'm producing the best. To me, I want to have the best nutritional thing that I can sell to the public, and I know that they're not thinking along this line. Some of

[201] Interview: Roseau 5

> them mention that they use forbidden sprays and things. It doesn't bother them at all to use this, see.[202]

Now, here's an exchange with an extremely liberal farmer from Madison:

> AD: So it's sounds like you're implying or getting at, someone who's conservative politically [and selling at the farmers market] is probably going to be interested in making a bunch of money?
>
> M1: Yeah, exactly. I think they are doing it for the money making whereas for our farm it's to make a living and to pay off our costs.[203]

Finally, there was one conservative farmer in Alexandria who had actually interacted with liberal farmers and found common ground regarding critiques of the industrial food system and alternative farming techniques. This was the most hopeful position I encountered in terms of potential for cross-ideology dialogue or collaboration. Nevertheless, while he was intrigued and possibly even inspired by these shared modes of thinking, he saw them in terms of personal morality rather than the potential for political action or policy change.

> A4: We find common ground in many areas. There are a lot of people who are farming similar to us because they don't want to pollute the earth, but they're not all coming from the same perspective. I do it as a Christian, a follower of the teachings of Christ, of Jesus. But I have common ground with many who are not professing Christians, there are just eager to try to save the Earth. In other areas I have more common ground with a lot of home-schooling families, and not all of them are interested in organic agriculture, but they're concerned with raising their kids right. So in each area I find a group of people that I have camaraderie with. We can talk and enjoy doing it. That's fascinating to me. We're not all working out of the same framework in our thinking.

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[202] Interview: Alexandria 6
[203] Interview: Madison 1

> AD: And when you relate and interact and work with those people who do share those values around organic farming, this kind of farming, and you find that you have common ground there but that you differ in other ways - as I've said I'm specifically interested in politics - when you find maybe somebody that you don't agree with politically, what's that interaction like? Or has that happened?
>
> A4: Oh, all the time. It's fascinating. I respect anybody that is trying to do something they believe is right, because it's right. If they're doing it because they think they're doing it because it's right - that's an honorable motive to me. Hmm, this is interesting. If this is the heart of your study - most of my contacts are amiable on the surface. We can have a good time together.[204]

The end picture then, is of a fair amount of reticence to acknowledge any clear political implications of farmers' market interaction, and upon acknowledgment, considerable confusion and misunderstanding, especially about people from a different political perspective. The point here is not to criticize the people I interviewed for not always being cognizant of food politics. It's actually quite understandable that politics is omitted from conversations at the farmers' market because positive social and economic relationships are built between and among vendors and consumers, and they are not interested in hurting these relationships or destroying the harmony that exists. A conservative farmer in Madison made it clear that discussing politics would likely cause damage to his business and ruin the rapport he has people at the market:

> When I go to the farmers' market, just like going to any store downtown, you don't ask them what their political beliefs are before you buy something from them, do you? So my customers don't come up and ask me if I'm a conservative or liberal so it really doesn't get discussed....I've taken cash from people for payment, I've taken checks from people for payment. On those checks I've seen everything from Christian symbols to gay and lesbian symbols. Do I not do business with one of those two customers? Well, does a

[204] Interview: Alexandria 4

> businessman downtown not to business with one of those customers?...If I'm going to discriminate against my customers I might as well stay home and not go to the market and I'm not going to have enough sales. Pretty soon the words going to get around that well, it doesn't pay to go to that vendor because he only sells to half of the people.[205]

This is a common approach of people to their social networks.[206] The point here is that while there is significant common ground across the political divide regarding how to improve or transform the agri-food system, there is also misunderstanding about that common ground and little belief or acknowledgment of the farmers' market being situated within agri-food politics. What really is the political role of farmers' market? Furthermore, as someone concerned about pragmatic politics and interested in transforming the agri-food system, what kinds of normative prescriptions can be made under these circumstances? Should activists try to create forums of deliberative democracy at the farmers' market to increase tolerance and understanding? Should activists involved in increasing participation in "food democracy" which scholars like Hassenein and Dupis and Goodman, see as ultimately needing to be "progressive" or "leftist" or "liberal" efforts, rethink their strategies and try to enlist conservatives as well? Can this enlisting be done through the farmers' market?

To offer an answer to these questions, it's important to first investigate the relationship between participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. The political scientist Diana Mutz has done important recent empirical research on this relationship, which reveals insights that are particularly relevant to this project and

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[205] Interview: Madison 3
[206] Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side.*

to answering these questions. Mutz began her work intending to find evidence to corroborate the theory that "hearing the other side" or engaging in deliberative democracy with those from opposing viewpoints will increase understanding of political issues, establish stronger policy positions, *and* encourage political participation. This positive correlation between deliberation and more engaged, and informed participation has been articulated by a number of important thinkers,[207] and deliberation has historically been identified as a facilitator for "political participation" by the American National Election Studies.[208] Agri-food scholars like Hassanein also draw a positive correlation: "The best hope for finding workable solutions to conflicts about the character and direction of the agro-food system is through the active participation of the citizenry (in the broad, denizen sense of the word) and political engagement to work out our differences."[209] I also thought this correlation to exist upon beginning my own research. If this positive correlation actually exists, then a course of action for engaging farmers' market participants would be relatively clear: get liberals and conservatives talking so they improve each other's understanding and increase their motivation to solve problems and then recruit people to collaborate and be politically active in transforming the food system.

One of the major critiques, however, of calls for deliberative democratic forums is their impracticality. The basic conception of deliberative democracy is that

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[207] For a few examples that Mutz draws on, see J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*. Bobbs-Merrill. 1969 - Original work published 1859; Hanna Arendt. *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Viking Press, 1968; Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
[208] Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, 20.
[209] Hassanein,"Practicing food democracy."

it happens among voluntary, free, diverse participants who agree on the basic principles of the enterprise, commit to ongoing discussion, recognize each other's legitimate deliberative capacities, and are ensured that outcomes of the process will not be inconsequential. The ideal requirements for deliberative democracy articulated by key theorists[210] are as follows:

1. Participants in deliberation are not "constrained by the authority of prior norms or requirements" and are assured they can act on decisions or conclusions made through the process.
2. Deliberation occurs through reasoned arguments: "proposals may be rejected because they are not defended with acceptable reasons, even if they could be defended."
3. Participants are formally equal in that they have equal power to propose agenda items and make arguments. They are also substantively equal "in that the existing distribution of power and resources does not shape their chances to contribute to deliberation, nor does that distribution play an authoritative role in their deliberation."
4. The ideal goal of deliberation is to arrive at consensus.

As Mutz and others have argued, these conditions are very difficult to meet. So, how does political deliberation actually happen in less idealistic, formal ways? Mutz argues it does happen in everyday conversation, primarily amongst people with large social networks and often at workplaces. She calls these "cross-cutting" conversations vs. deliberation because they are much less formal. Her empirical research, however, reveals that increasing cross-cutting conversations among people with different political views actually decreases political participation in activities

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[210] This particular articulation is drawn from Joshua Cohen, in his chapter "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy" in Hamlin, Alan and Philip Pettit, eds.,*The Good Polity*. Oxford:Basil Blackwell, 1989. For other prominent articulations see John Elster, "The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory" in James Bohman and William Regh, *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts:MIT, 1997 and Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol 1, tr. T. McCarthy, Boston, Massachussetts :Beacon Press, 1984.

like voting because it causes people to become more ambivalent about their own views, or more hesitant to take a clear-cut position amongst differing opinions and complexity. People who have smaller, more tight-knit social networks tend to discuss politics only with like-minded others, and thus their own opinions are reinforced and political participation is encouraged.

While the farmers' market would be a possible forum for cross-cutting conversations, the outcome of such conversations is considerably murkier if Mutz's conclusions held true. If interaction and discussion was fostered at the market, would the shared modes of thinking highlighted be strong enough to encourage political participation in other forms, such as contacting representatives, attending rallies, or donating to agricultural policy reform campaigns? Or are disagreements about other ideological issues or over major moral and epistemic starting points too strong and thus these conversations would result in increased hesitance and political inaction?

To answer these questions, other questions of strategy would have to be answered by activists. What would the ultimate goal of increasing interaction and dialogue be? Is it to create more tolerance and understanding and less polarization, social goods which might have broad but unpredictable political outcomes? Or is it to foster more immediate action on changing the food system? Answering these questions requires more research, and likely some careful and small-scale active research that did try to foster some form cross-cutting conversation would be revealing.

My sense is the farmers' market is not a good space for formal deliberative democracy, (assuming it's even feasible to create this kind of formal space which is doubtful) because it will likely destroy the social and economic harmony that exists there. Right now, farmers' markets are helpful though imperfect alternatives for the production and consumption to the conventional food system. If any kind of formal deliberation or even less formal cross-cutting conversation is to be fostered, it should be done in a separate space.

CHAPTER5: CONCLUSION: The Farmers' Market as a Foundation for Further Dialogue and Political Action

In remains unclear how exactly the American food system needs to be transformed to make it more just and ecologically sustainable. The push towards decentralization, both in terms of geography and power holds promise, but as scholars[211] appropriately warn, the meaning of "local food" is contested and however it is defined it is not a panacea. Alternative food initiatives like farmers' markets do foster alternative ways of growing, consuming, and thinking about food. They do build relationships among farmers and eaters and allow for the possibility of more accountability and awareness regarding the food system.[212] The proliferation of farmers' markets just in the last two decades, from 1,755 in 1994 to 7,175 in 2011[213], is impressive and important, especially when grouped with the growth of other initiatives like CSA's and community gardens. The market, however, for this food produced by small farmers is beginning to become saturated.[214] Only so many consumers are willing and able to buy their food directly from small farmers.

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[211] See Melanie Dupuis and David Goodman, "Should We Go "Home" to Eat?"; C. Claire Hinrichs, "Practice and Place in Remaking the Food System".
[212] See Gillespie et al. "Farmers' Markets as Keystones in Rebuilding Local and Regional Food Systems".
[213] USDA. "Farmers' Market Growth: 1994-2009."
[214] Katie Zezima. "As Farmers' Markets Go Mainstream, Some Fear a Glut."*The New York Times*. August 20th, 2011, accessed November 8th, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/21/us/21farmers.html

As many activists and scholars are asking, how can these efforts be "scaled up" or expanded?[215] What does "scaled up" mean and how can it be done without reifying the current problems of the conventional food system? It's hard to imagine institutions like hospitals and universities, which purchase large amounts of food on a daily basis feasibly buying from dozens of small farmers to meet their needs or relying on storage vegetables like squash and beets to get them through the winter in colder climates. It's also hard to imagine large grocery stores disappearing because, again, only so many consumers are willing and able to buy directly from producers. What's needed then, are both systematic economic innovations and revolutionary policy changes. Economic innovations might include the creation of smaller, more regional distributors that can connect numerous small and midsize farms to institutional buyers and grocery retailers. The kinds of policy changes needed are numerous and it's difficult to know exactly where to start. The system of federal subsidies for commodities likely needs overhaul. Cultural changes will be essential too. As Michael Pollan has argued[216], consumers will probably need to get used to paying more for food if they expect higher quality, and more just and sustainable farming practices. Increased food prices will need to be paired then with efforts to assist low-income people in buying food (and hopefully growing some of their own).

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[215] Lindsey Day-Farnsworth et al,."Scaling Up: Meeting the Demand for Local Food". University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, December 2009, Accessed November 8th 2011, http://www.cias.wisc.edu/farm-to-fork/scaling-up-meeting-the-demand-for-local-food/

[216] Michael Pollan,."Sustainable Eating & Nutrition: FAQ & Useful Links", Accessed November 8th 2011, http://michaelpollan.com/resources/sustainable-eating-nutrition/

The primary goal of this research project has clearly not been to explore these very practical questions, but these questions are not far removed from the goal of this project. The point I'm really trying to make here is that transforming the food system will be complicated, and will take a committed, broad-scale effort that involves grassroots activity, economic entrepreneurship, and city, county, state, and federal action. Individual and neighborhood level actions like planting a garden in one's backyard and participating in farmers' markets are important. These actions are the building blocks for a broader transformation. How can these building blocks be leveraged for broader political action and policy change?

I've argued that concerns with the conventional food system and serious participation in alternatives like farmers' markets are not relegated to a particularly narrow political perspective, but cross conventional political boundaries in important ways. People we might call committed liberals, radical leftists, traditionalist conservatives, and moderates all see the need for the food system to change, and see the farmers' market as part of that momentum of change. Furthermore, by examining political and intellectual history, I've argued that this shared perspective is not *simply* evidence of confusion over political identity or of meaningless political terminology. The paired terms "liberal" and "conservative" do present a problematic dichotomy, but they do still mean something for people and help them connect with and negotiate deeply held values. Both liberal and conservative ideas help people form critiques of the conventional food system and provide starting points for further thinking and action.

The farmers and shoppers I interviewed were motivated, each in their own unique way, by a belief in some form of direct democracy, progressive policies that benefit small producers more than big ones, the importance of community, ecologically sustainable practices, and skepticism of reductionist scientific and technocratic thinking. The people I interviewed showed a remarkable willingness to contemplate the complexity of the agri-food system, admit their lack of knowledge or experience, and listen to other points of view. Some saw a clear connection between the way they farmed or purchased food to broader political forces. For others, the connection was something they had not yet considered or was less clear. Yet even members of this latter group were interested in educating themselves and others about different kinds of food and farming, and were intrigued by the possibility of political activity that could support practices in which they firmly believed.

For many, the farmers' market was a place where this education happened, but it wasn't a place where people from across the political spectrum talked about the politics of the agri-food system. Nor was it clear that it should be. But if broad scale transformation of the agri-food system is going to happen, this dialogue has to happen somewhere. Where might that place be? This study was quite small and limited. I only interviewed individual farmers or consumers (with a few exceptions when spouses or friends were present by their own volition). Further research is needed that utilizes focus groups or some kind of interactive forum. Given the novelty of connecting politics to food and farming among many of the people I interviewed, and the difficulty of meeting ideal conditions for deliberative

democracy, creating a highly formalized deliberative democracy process seems inappropriate. I could imagine, however, an action research project which recruits willing participants of varying political perspectives from farmers' markets or other alternative food initiatives to engage in a less formalized, though highly respectful conversation. These conversations might literally be held in community centers near farmers' markets directly after a market one day. Holding several of these conversations in different locations (metropolitan centers and small rural towns, different regions of the country) would help clarify whether there is potential for immediate collaborative action amongst those on the political left and right or if many more of these types of conversations are needed to first breakdown stagnating political animosity or confusion.

The farmers' markets I visited are dynamic places. They are manifestations of rural and urban relations, human and environmental systems, economic, cultural, social, and *political* interactions. Politics may occasionally be overtly present at markets, like during campaign season, but most of the time politics are more subtly present. This subtlety, however, belies substantial power because participants at markets are there because of deeply held values and complex and profound modes of thinking. Each participant connects these values or modes of thinking with their political perspectives in unique ways, but those connections are not limited to a single narrow liberal or conservative ideology. While the farmers' market may not be a forum for deliberative democracy, it's still an important starting point for cross-ideology conversation about how to create a better food system.

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