

**NOTES ON THE STATE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE:
Young Farmers and “The Farm” After the 1980s Farm Crisis**

by

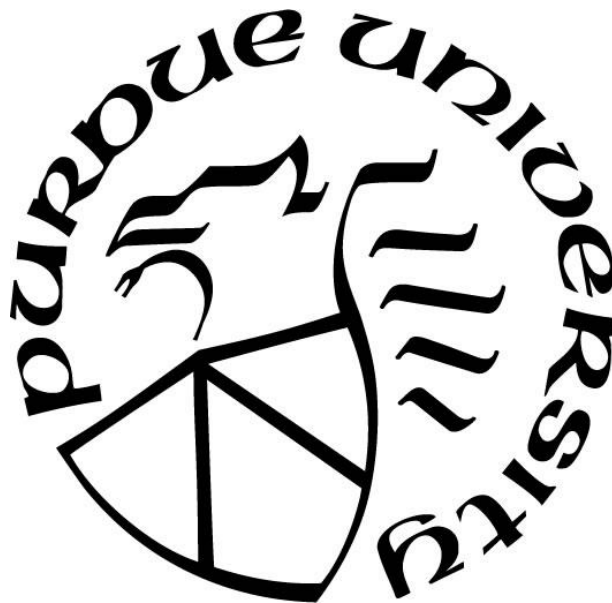
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*Dedicated to the memory of my Gram,
a simple, hardworking, God-loving farmer's wife,
whom I still miss (and think of) every day.*

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PREFACE

As early as I can remember, my family always referred to it as “The Farm” – the 153-acre piece of property where my Gram lived in a one-story brick home with a large, red barn nestled into a hillside, a decaying corncrib, a rusty tin-roofed granary, and a thriving vegetable garden with as many raspberries and strawberries a growing girl required. Even though I know there were scattered agricultural relics across the property, such as a 1950 Farmall M series tractor, an out of commission hay-baler, a discarded plow, and coils of fencing, I do not remember a time in my childhood when my immediate family planted or harvested the fields there. In the early 1980s, I’ve been told that the last of the cattle were sold off or slaughtered mainly due to the passing of my grandfather; yet, also in part because of the Farm Crisis – after which my parents could not see their future in agriculture and took up occupations away from the property. However, our family would always live near The Farm to hunt, harvest firewood, and allow some Amish neighbors to till the land and plant crops.

Over the years, I became interested in sustainable lifestyle practices and grew to respect farmers for the hard work required of them to survive in rural America and a profession that I realized was steadily shrinking in population. When I graduated high school at the turn of the millennium, I recall an influential teacher continually repeating, “Get out of here! This is a great place to raise a family but leaving is the best thing. You’ll learn so much elsewhere. Come back and live [in rural Michigan] after being away for a while.” I did move away for college but did not go far. Receiving my undergraduate and Master’s degrees from the same public university approximately twenty-five miles from The Farm, I remained immersed in a local (and familiar) lifestyle. The school I attended was surrounded by farms and the apartment that I lived in was

encompassed with corn and soybean fields. My major and subsequent thesis project were chosen because of these interests, with a focus on traditional fiber art processes.

Fast forward to two years after The Great Recession, I moved back to The Farm in 2010. At the time, I believed I was making the most financially responsible decision – paying less in rent and gaining the ability to pay off my student loan debt. I relied on the land more and helped my family by living in the vacant farmhouse. I planted a vegetable garden, just as my grandmother had done – although, I was not confident in my ability to grow raspberries and strawberries. On The Farm, I felt the most at home that I had since moving away for college. However, I could see radical changes of progress happening in my once deteriorating rural community.

For the last two decades, the population of Amish people had been steadily increasing, roadside stands had begun popping up to sell produce grown at the local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), numerous advertisements were erected at the ends of driveways with the promise of “Farm Fresh Eggs,” and people travelling by The Farm started stopping on the roadside to take photos of its weathered, rustic barn. Most interestingly, trips to the local farmers market had become a weekly priority for many local producers and consumers. In the short time that I had been away, it seemed as if the definitions of the places and people I had become accustomed with in rural America and the agricultural industry had changed to encompass more romanticized versions of “farmers” and “the farm.”

When I first began the American Studies program at Purdue University in the Fall 2014 semester, I had a lengthy conversation with the director of my program about changing my research project from the traditional practices of Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts to a more agriculturally centered subject matter. Initially, I explained that I saw a direct connection

between studying rural agriculture and traditional arts and crafts processes because of the rising attention given to sustainable environmental practices. Yet, it was also due to the amount of young people migrating away from the city to more rural areas and their growing interest in the artisanal and locavore food movements. At that time, he told me that throughout the research process he wanted me to hold on to one simple statement, “Don’t lose your memory of ‘The Farm’.” At first, I took this to mean that my project would be one of personal, nostalgic conservation. However, I understand now that by focusing on the contributions and impacts of other individual’s versions of “The Farm,” this project has developed into something of a much larger importance – one of rural culture renaissance, with special consideration given to Young Farmers migrating to rural landscapes and participating in agricultural professions. Building on my original interpretation to my advisor’s remark, the dissertation that follows is about some of the voices who currently reside in the Midwest and the spaces that they inhabit.

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ABSTRACT

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Historically, American farmers have been identified as white, middle-aged, working- to middle-class, men who reside in rural environments to grow large expanses of corn, soybeans, or wheat. However, this dissertation questions this fraught representation of past farmers and introduces a new identity in contemporary American agriculture – Young Farmers. Usually, Young Farmers are first-generation agriculturalists, who hold small parcels of land, produce a diverse assortment of crops, and adopt items of rural material culture to better perform as farmers. Additionally, they believe their lifestyles and their existences are dependent upon interactions with their local environments and members of their communities. By focusing on these individuals, this study examines how American farmers, the environments they inhabit, the goods they produce, and the locations they distribute their products have changed, especially after the most recent Farm Crisis in the 1980s.

To best understand these alterations, this dissertation offers an exploration of three farmers market locations in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula to highlight and compare the social, cultural, environmental, and economic shifts occurring in the agricultural community. Arguably, farmers markets provide Young Farmers a space to meet prospective consumers and to distribute their products to them. Likewise, these sites are a venue for Young Farmers to develop successful systems of community with other people involved with small-scale farming.

Throughout this dissertation, I layer ethnographic and historical archive data with quantitative

metrics, such as U.S. Census Bureau data to better explain demographic shifts occurring across Michigan's farming landscape. Additionally, I critically analyze images associated with past and current representations of individuals involved with agriculture to address how Young Farmers redefine themselves culturally and participate in methods of food and economic sustainability. By studying and understanding the codependence of the people and places who comprise farmers and farming communities in a representative location like Michigan, I recognize the relevance of the Midwest as a crossroads of contemporary American agriculture.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

A middle-aged woman stands beside a balding man who is perceived to be her husband in front of a white-washed, two-story house. A bushel basket of leafy, green vegetables sits on the porch. There is a red barn in the background built on a piece of property enveloped with trees. The woman wears a white-collared, black dress, covered in a simple, white-polka-dotted, brown kitchen apron. There is a cameo brooch pinned at the nape of her neck. She looks despondently to the side, gazing at something outside of the painted scene. The man clutches a three-tined hayfork and dons a pair of worn denim bib-overalls underneath a jet-black coat. His wire-rimmed, round-spectacled, long face stares straight forward and is expressionless. This painting, Grant Wood's *American Gothic* from 1930, may be the most iconic example of small-town life portraiture of the last century.¹ Arguably, it could also be the most reproduced image of a quintessential farmer and his wife. Yet, this painting is an essentialized version of historic American agriculture and obscures a wider variety of farm experiences that differ from it. In fact, twentieth century farming in the United States has not been particularly stable for all farmers and is marked by transitions that the static image of *American Gothic* seems to overlook. Farmer displacement is a regular feature of modern America, happening during the Great Depression, the Farm Crisis in the 1980s, and the Great Recession of 2008, influencing the production and distribution of goods in all manner of ways. Recently, many long-established family farms have disappeared because of the dramatic change in farming affordability (i.e. rise in overhead costs such as land management, machinery, and cost of living) and the lowered regional economy.

¹ See Appendix A.

According to editors Zoe Bradbury, Severine von Tscharner Fleming, and Paula Manalo

Greenhorns: The Next Generation of American Farmers:

Today's accepted rural narrative is one of crisis, abandonment, and attrition. For the past 30 years, as farms got bigger and prices spiraled ever downward, young people have been leaving agriculture and rural areas, and the rural culture has suffered tremendously for that loss. Small towns across the country stand empty and forlorn. There isn't enough money pumping through local businesses. There are fewer and fewer parishioners and contra dancers. Mega dairies, feedlots, processing factories, and grain elevators stand tall over an agricultural landscape that is ever less enticing and less accessible to ambitious youth.²

Currently, the average farmer is fifty-seven years old and either nearing retirement or on the brink of bankruptcy.³ Furthermore, recent census information showed a loss of nearly 95,000 farms and a weekly loss of almost 330 farmers leaving this profession.⁴ Due to this paradigm shift, I argue younger groups of individuals have begun to farm these landscapes, capitalize on the idyllic culture stereotypical of the farm, and distribute food in alternative venues such as farmers markets to revitalize consumer involvement with American agriculture.

Broadly, this dissertation considers the history of American farming, agricultural sustainability, and the material culture of farmers in Michigan to explore rural place making. More specifically, I conducted semi-structured interviews of people involved in agricultural occupations in rural Midwestern landscapes to understand the changing face of farming and "the

² Zoe Bradbury, Severine von Tscharner Fleming, and Paula Manalo, eds., *Greenhorns: The Next Generation of American Farmers* (North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2012), 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "10 Things the new Census of Agriculture tells us about Family Farmers and Our Food System - Farm Aid," Farm Aid, accessed April 10, 2015, http://www.farmaid.org/site/c.qlI5IhNVJsE/b.9147949/k.D6B7/10_Things_the_new_Census_of_Agriculture_tells_uu_about_Family_Farmers_and_Our_Food_System.htm.

farm.” Primarily though, I focus on a newer identity in American agriculture – Young Farmers⁵ – and examine how their introduction to the farming industry has revitalized communities where small, sustainable farm practices have fallen by the wayside. Arguably, Young Farmers are creating a paradigm shift away from the family and corporate farm models stereotypical of rural spaces and places to transform the farming industry by adopting romanticized notions of agriculture and to commodify certain aspects of the lifestyle. Nevertheless, by employing alternative methods of food distribution, such as farmer’s markets, cooperatives, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Young Farmers are revitalizing the sense of rural and farming community which has recently been under duress.

With a narrower focus, this dissertation explores three farmers markets in Michigan where producers meet consumers to create centralized spaces of agricultural capitalism. Additionally, this study compares the social, cultural, and environmental changes occurring in the community of each farmers market location to better understand the function of Young Farmers in those specific places. Michigan is an excellent location to perform this interdisciplinary research because it currently ranks fourth in the nation for farmer’s markets, is the nation’s second-most agriculturally diverse state, and produces more than 300 different

⁵ While I elaborate and build on their definition throughout this dissertation, I borrow this name from the National Young Farmer’s Coalition (NYFC). The NYFC “uses ‘young farmers’ to include all people who are kicking off a career in agriculture, typically in their first ten years of growing.” Their definition “includes anyone from a first-year farm apprentice to someone pursuing a mid-life career change to agriculture.” They “use the term ‘young’ to grab the attention of ...policy makers...[because] social movements in history were in part driven by young people, and the food movement is no exception.” Moreover, they report that the second-fastest growing demographic of farmer is people under the age of 35 and 78 percent of this group did not grow up on a farm. “Why Young Farmers?,” National Young Farmers Coalition, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.youngfarmers.org/why-young/>.

agricultural commodities.⁶ Meanwhile, Michigan's suffering economy resulted in many people moving out of the state after the Great Recession in 2008.⁷ After this recent economy blight, I contend Young Farmers are developing successful systems of agricultural goods production and demonstrating strong farming structures while helping to rebuild their local economy. As this dissertation will reveal, Michigan's Young Farmers are establishing themselves as local and specialty food producers and distributors at nearby farmers markets where they provide additional and alternative options for regional consumers. Furthermore, they use the farmers market space for agricultural community development to build relationships with other farmers in the region. Ultimately, this dissertation analyzes how Young Farmers adopt and incorporate material culture from past agrarian representations to perform ways of belonging, embody aspects of nostalgia, and introduce new systems of food production to commodify the environment of the farm. By unearthing the experiences of Young Farmers in Michigan, this work expands our understanding of American farm culture while also devising numerous ways to revive, rebuild, and sustain rural landscapes. Most importantly, by looking at a wide variety of Young Farmer experiences in Michigan, this dissertation allows us to see the tensions occurring in a multitude of contemporary agricultural landscapes and challenge the concrete notions of past farmer and farming representations such as those depicted in Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

⁶ "Gov. Ricky Snyder Celebrates 'Food and Agriculture Month' in Michigan," *Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development*, last modified February 27, 2015, http://Michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1572_28248-348687--,00.html.

⁷ This thread is directed by news media coverage from the time in articles such as: Susan Saulny and Monica Davey's "New Economic Fears Arise in Michigan" (2008) published in *The New York Times*, Paul Harris's piece "How Detroit, the Motor City, turned into a Ghost Town" (2009) published in *The Guardian*, and Edward Hoogterp's article "Great Recession Leaves Michigan poorer, Census Numbers Show" (2011) published on *mlive.com*. However, I also took into account U.S. Census Bureau data when considering this topic.

1.1 What is a Farm?

While my subject matter focuses primarily on the fresh faces of Young Farmers inhabiting agricultural spaces in more contemporary times, it is extremely difficult to focus on these individuals without connecting them to the people, places, and/or things which have aided in the creation of their agricultural lifestyles. The social construct of Young Farmers would not be conceptually verifiable without the historic influence of family farmers, the knowledge of the goods produced in farming communities, or the socio-political and economic significance of corporate farms. Therefore, it is necessary to unpack the socio-cultural aspects of a variety of people, places, and things which have historically influenced agriculture in America to better understand how Young Farmers adopt aspects of other farming models to create their own methods of identity formation.

The United States was premised on an agrarian farm ideal, and Thomas Jefferson sung its praises. Of course, this was at the expense of American Indian peoples who had their own farming and harvesting practices. In effect, the erasure of their farming practices and their forced relocation onto reservations marks one of many transitions of identity and ownership related to land. More specifically for this dissertation, the historiography section considers three key developmental and transitional phases of agriculture in the United States after white settler colonization: from Thomas Jefferson's eighteenth-century agrarian ideologies to the 1970s "get big or get out" era of Earl Butz, the 1980s Farm Crisis, and the Great Recession of 2008 to better explain who a farmer was, where a farm was stereotypically located, and what material culture aspects defined the farmer and farm.⁸ Coincidentally, much of the existing literature about

⁸ It is necessary to include this broad period to incorporate the values and ideals which are intrinsic to being/becoming a Young Farmer, as well as explain how the economics of late capitalism have changed the agricultural industry in America.

farming and farmers reflects the importance of its placement in rural environments. While stereotypes of rural America's farm culture and landscape are major reference points for how Young Farmers learn specific farming ideologies, I argue that rural America is not the only place where farming is occurring anymore. Some of the Young Farmers that I write about in later chapters will be performing agricultural acts in urban centers and other non-rural locations. However, throughout this dissertation, I may use the words "rural" and "farm" interchangeably to justify the messiness associated with the hybridization and liminality of spaces where Young Farmers reside.

About these concepts, I use the word liminality throughout this dissertation for two reasons. First, I use it to describe various types (i.e. socio-economic, agricultural, spatial, etc.) of "in-between" borders for which Young Farmers are standing on the precipice.⁹ About the "in-between," Homi Bhabha makes it quite clear throughout *The Location of Culture* that overlapping cultures "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood...that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration...in the act of defining society itself."¹⁰ For the purposes of this dissertation, I argue Young Farmers are combining stereotypical characteristics of rural and urban cultures such as using vacant green space for food production purposes, establishing community ties with their neighbors to generate networks of profitability, and developing marketing and education savviness to create their own hybridized identity which resides in-between rural and urban locations. Secondly, I use the term liminality similar to how many anthropologists have in conversations regarding rites of passage. In those works, it has

⁹ Homi Bhabha's theoretical discussion of the "in-between" from *The Location of Culture* (1994) is similar to Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), both of which I elaborate on further in Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: NY, Routledge, 1994), 1-2.

been characterized as a combination of “opposite processes and notions in a single representation...that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both.”¹¹ With this definition in mind, liminality is especially helpful when describing the ways in which Young Farmers have adopted practices of rural farm culture and incorporated them into their lifestyles – resulting in an identity which is no longer rural or urban, but holds characteristics of both.

Historically, rural areas in the Midwest have been synonymous with farming because of the vast expanses of property required to yield large amounts of agricultural products. People who migrated to rural Midwest areas brought “strong families, a durable sense of community, and a tradition of neighborliness reinforced by kinship ties.”¹² Throughout history, larger families have been able to farm a greater expanse of property because of their bigger workforce size – more children resulted in more people who could perform farm work tasks. Additionally, rural families have a greater potential for self-provisioning “through fruit and vegetable gardening, hunting, fishing, wood gathering, self-employment, or bartering for goods and services.”¹³ Although there were great distances between some farms, rural farming communities relied on neighboring farm families to provide a shared workforce especially during times of planting and harvesting. Usually, these families had a centralized gathering space which bound them together as a community (i.e. township, grange hall, city/town/village, etc.) Now, possibly

¹¹ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage,” in *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* editors, Louise C. Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1994), 9.

¹² David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 86.

¹³ Katherine MacTavish and Sonya Salamon, “What do Rural Families Look Like Today?” in *Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-first Century* editors, David Brown and Louis Swanson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 80.

the most widely used definition of “rural” comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, which states that rural places consist of “all territory, population, and housing units located outside [Urbanized Areas] and [Urban Clusters].”¹⁴ However, for the purposes of this research, I find this definition problematic because it is mutually exclusive on defining “urbanized area” and “urban cluster.”¹⁵ With the combination of these two very strict descriptions comes the exclusion of many locations where rural Midwesterners would identify as home due to the rather small population value used for designating urban clusters. Many locales of the Midwestern Young Farmers referenced throughout this dissertation would not fit within these stringent parameters because they live in places which are not remote; yet, my informants would self-identify as rural residents based on their community-based customs, as well as traits and values which are inherited practices associated with rural heritage. Therefore, I propose rural areas in the Midwest center on socio-cultural significance rather than focusing strictly on population size. Likewise, David Brown and Louis Swanson explain that the longevity of rural placemaking is reliant on the natural resource production occurring in these locations. In *Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-first Century* they write:

[N]early three-fourths of U.S. counties are classified as nonmetropolitan areas. This means that most of the nation’s natural resources are rural. Energy, metals, water, soil, timber, wildlife habitat, open space, and attractive viewsapes are all primarily rural

¹⁴ “Geographic Terms and Concepts – Urban and Rural,” census.gov, accessed January 27, 2018, https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_urbanrural.html

¹⁵ It should be noted here that the U.S. Census Bureau also lists Urbanized Areas as “consists[ing] of densely developed territory that contains 50,000 or more people” and urban clusters are “densely developed territory that has at least 2,500 people but fewer than 50,000 people.”

resources. America's future depends on the prudent use and conservation of this rural-based natural endowment.¹⁶

In connection with these scholars, I maintain that Young Farmers in the Midwest are encouraging the conservation of rural places by bringing recognition to these larger environmental concerns, as well as integrating rural communities with opportunities for socioeconomic growth, greater race and ethnic diversity, work experience, and a broader knowledge set representative of the modern agricultural industry.¹⁷

Currently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a farm as “any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year.”¹⁸ However, this relatively small monetary measure and vague location description has not always been the case. Prior to 1974, the USDA defined a farm not by the volume of sales, but by its physical size and amount of acreage worked.¹⁹ Just as the definition of American farms has changed over time, so has the appearance of the people who participate in the agricultural industry. There are three archetypes of farmers which this dissertation addresses: (1) family farmers; (2) corporate farmers; and (3) Young Farmers. While each categorization has distinguishable differences, there are also overlapping similarities

¹⁶ David Brown and Louis Swanson, “Introduction: Rural America Enters the New Millennium,” in *Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-first Century* editors David Brown and Louis Swanson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁷ Kenneth M Johnson, “Unpredictable Directions of Rural Population Growth and Migration” in *Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-first Century* editors, David Brown and Louis Swanson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 20.

¹⁸ “United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Glossary,” *United States Department of Agriculture*, last modified November 30, 2018, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-household-well-being/glossary/>.

¹⁹ Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture Since 1929* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 147.

between them. Within these definitions, it is noteworthy to consider the demographic information related to the people who work in agricultural environments, the general aesthetic they have portrayed throughout history in various forms of print media, the types of goods they produce on their farms, as well as the geographical statistics from the land they cultivate in order to better understand the differences and similarities shared between the groups.²⁰

1.2 Who is a Farmer?

Similar to other definitions, ideologies associated with the family farm have not been totally static. Currently, the USDA defines a family farm as, “one in which ownership and control of the farm business is held by a family of individuals related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Family ties can and often do extend across households and generations.”²¹ However, it also states, “Historically, it was not uncommon for the family farm to provide all of the labor for the farm and to own all of the land and capital of the farm. That is no longer true today, although the extent to which individual farms hire nonfamily labor, rent-in land or other capital, or contract for various farm services varies greatly across farms.”²² Therefore, I prefer to envision

²⁰ Throughout this dissertation I will refer to the acreage of farms as either “small,” “medium,” or “large” depending on the model of farming of which I’m referring. In most cases, “small” farms vary between a vacant city lot up to eighty acres and are usually connected with Young Farmers. “Medium”-sized farms usually range between forty acres and six hundred forty acres. These farms are usually congruent with the family farm model because they require more manpower to produce a higher yield on the larger piece of land. Likewise, “large” farms are usually symbolic of the corporate farm model. The acreage of these farms is vastly different from both small and medium-sized farms with amounts beginning in the thousands. While the amount of land in production is one distinguishing characteristic between farming archetypes, a combination of other attributes is necessary when categorizing individuals.

²¹ “United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Glossary.”

²² Ibid.

family farmers as sharing characteristics similar to the nostalgic yeoman archetype Sonya Salamon outlines in *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest*.

In the work, Salamon creates a typology of Midwestern farming patterns after performing an in-depth ethnography of farmers residing in the region. Above all, she notes the importance of land ownership on the profitability of a farm. She states:

A family cannot farm without land. Land is of such importance within an agrarian social system that whoever owns it has power over family and community members, especially those who want to farm. Control of land is the measure of status within the farm family and family status within the community...Land is a sacred trust maintained by achieving continuity of family land ownership and an agrarian way of life in a particular ethnic community...[W]hoever controls land dominates the system. Elders possess power in the family because they own the land, and elders from families with more land exercise more power in the community. As a man controls land through management, he can exert power over women and children involved in the farm.²³

Paralleling Salamon's argument, I contend family farmers believe land ownership is their utmost distinguishing characteristic. They prefer to own land, expand based on family capabilities, and avoid debt and/or costly expenditures. They believe "land is a commodity, and farming is a business in which accumulation of land is a means to increase family wealth and power."²⁴ Additionally, family farmers have strong knowledge of agricultural processes, familial roles, and social networks within their rural communities. Furthermore, they have gained the knowledge of farming practices through the passing down of traditions and agriculture techniques.²⁵ With a

²³ Sonya Salamon, *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, & Community in the Midwest* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 91-93.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tradition is a personal experience, filled with learned skills, customs, rituals, and stories that are maintained and performed through generations. A fitting definition, Jane Becker describes tradition in *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of American Folk* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998) as: "the past, of course, but also to the way in which the past is transmitted; it refers to the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation and implies value and veneration. It represents a lingering of the past in

medium-sized piece of property to produce their goods, family farms are where multiple generations of family work together as a single unit, usually for long hours, to make sure all earn a living from the land.²⁶ These methods are necessary in furthering the essence of traditionalism that family farms embody.

Generally, photographs of family farmers share similarities with those visually represented in Grant Wood's *American Gothic*. Usually they portray multiple generations of family members positioned in front of a piece of farming equipment or in an agricultural setting (see Figures 1.1-1.3).²⁷ These types of images reflect the importance placed on the rural environment and its influence on the culture of farming communities. However, they also depict the role technology has played in changing these cultural landscapes since the Industrial Revolution. By this I mean, these images (from a not so distant past) show how family farmers usually require a piece of equipment designed for mass production in order to achieve a sense of belonging within their community. Ultimately, forms of technological advancement allow family farmers to exhibit their socio-economic class status and help them further identify as farmers.²⁸ Moreover, photographs like these are representative of the demographic generally characterized as America's current farmer – an aging, white, working- to middle-class, male who supports their family by cultivating a piece of property in order to yield agricultural products meant

the present, a touchstone with those who have gone before and have left behind some of what they held most important for later generations," 1.

²⁶ Jerry Apps and Steve Apps, *Rural Wit and Wisdom: Time-Honored Values from the Heartland* (Amherst, MA: Amherst Press: 1997), 9.

²⁷ Joshua T. Brinkman, "From 'Hicks' to High Tech: Performative Use in the American Corn Belt," PhD diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2017.

²⁸ Ibid.



Figure 1.1 Michigan family farmers stand together in front of their John Deere tractor. Multiple generations of family members work together in the family farm model. Photograph from the *Hartland Project* (1955-2012) series, Oversize Box 11, D. James Galbraith Photographic Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Photograph reproduced with permission by the Bentley Historical Library.



Figure 1.2 Two men take a break with their family dog in rural Michigan. Note the barn in the background, style of everyday work clothes, and commodity brand grain sign. Photograph from the *Hartland Project* (1955-2012) series, Oversize Box 11, D. James Galbraith Photographic Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Photograph reproduced with permission by the Bentley Historical Library.



Figure 1.3 An aging man stands next to a tractor wearing overalls and a long-sleeved work shirt. Photograph from the *Hartland Project (1955-2012)* series, Box 2, James Galbraith Photographic Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Photograph reproduced with permission by the Bentley Historical Library.

for moderate capitalistic gain. Additionally, these individuals are usually photographed wearing clothing such as bib-overalls, flannel shirts, and brimmed hats all of which are emblematic of their rural surroundings and farming culture, where long work days outside require such commodities.

In addition to these discernable characteristics, family farmers have historically demonstrated strong, conservative values placed on hetero-patriarchal norms, with women usually holding less power than men on the farm. However, women have provided support in some of the production roles, such as driving the tractor and cooking meals at harvest times, bookkeeping and office work, and running errands away from the farm.²⁹ Additionally, the family farmer/farm model placed the continuity of land appropriation in high regard, as well as the traditional agrarian ways of life. By this I mean, land tenure is important and family farmers hand down land through successive generations to preserve the quality of the farm for the future. Inheritance law historically ensured that land is passed down from father to son – which allows the patrilineage of the farm to continue through successive generations. Other scholars support these claims, such as David Danbom who suggests:

The foundation of rural America was the nuclear family. The farm family served most of the functions families historically served, but its institutional centrality was enhanced by the American practice of settlement on individual farmsteads. The family was a means of controlling sexuality and a standard venue for bearing and raising children. It served a psychological function, providing love and care for its members. In nineteenth century America it was society's premier welfare institution, providing supervision and sustenance for those unable to function independently. And it was also an educational institution in which boys and girls learned to play the roles they would likely fill

²⁹ While I reference gender specific farm life tasks throughout this dissertation, this is usually considered an antiquated viewpoint. Some scholars who argue opposite trends are Carolyn Sachs et. al. book *The Rise of Women Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture* (2016), as well as Lu Ann Jones' *Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South* (2002), Barbara Temra Costa's *Farmer Jane: Women Changing the Way We Eat* (2010), Barbara Hall and Kathryn Gamble Lozier's *Women and the Land* (2017), and Carolyn Sachs' *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture, and Environment* (2nd ed., 2018).

throughout their lives...The nineteenth-century farm family was an economic as well as social institution. While urbanites increasingly separated their work from their homes, the family farm remained a business as well as a home. It was a cooperative economic endeavor, marked by a theoretical division of labor that sometimes broke down in practice. Men and boys mainly worked in the fields, producing crops and livestock for sale. Women and girls primarily maintained homes and produced food and household manufactures that advanced family self-sufficiency.³⁰

However, the USDA notes that “a preferred definition of a family farm would allow for organizational changes in the way in which operators structure their farm businesses as they respond to innovative changes in technology, the marketplace, and policies, but still capture the general concept of a family farm in which a family unit maintains control and ownership.”³¹ I would argue that this definition is somewhat problematic because it has some characteristics which mimic the corporate farm model with which many family farmers (specifically those who are interested in preserving traditional and sustainable methods of agricultural practices) do not identify, such as a board of stakeholders primarily interested in the financial potential of the farm and how it functions as an agribusiness.

Corporate farms (see Figures 1.4-1.8) are “large-scale farms, single crops/row crops grown continuously over many seasons; uniform high-yield hybrid crops; extensive use of pesticides, fertilizers, and external energy inputs; high labor efficiency; and dependency on agribusiness. In the case of livestock, production comes from confined, concentrated systems.”³² While this definition seems to have several shared attributes with the family farmer model I outlined previously, I see the corporate farm model different in a variety of ways. Most

³⁰ David Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 87.

³¹ “United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Glossary.”

³² Richard E. Wood, *Survival of Rural America: Small Victories and Bitter Harvests*” (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 148.

Figure 1.4 The highlighted portion of the illustrated map represents the 2462 total acres farmed by Packard Farms in Clare County, Michigan. Originally, the farm was worked by a sole proprietor (Roger Packard) until its incorporation in 1995 when a governing board and farm manager took over the operation. Map portion of the illustration provided by Farm and Home Publishers. Illustration reproduced with permission by Cliff Sheakley.



Figure 1.5 A small portion of outbuildings located at Packard Farms in Clare County, Michigan, Winter 2018. Housed inside the barns are a lot of cows. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.6 One of two main milking parlors at Packard Farms in Clare County, Michigan, Winter 2018. Dairy cows are milked here twenty-four hours a day, three-hundred sixty-five days a year. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.7 Some workers harvesting hay at Packard Farms in Clare County, Michigan, Summer 2018. Stereotypically on corporate farms, large expanses of fields are reserved for specific crops in order to produce the amount of feed for livestock. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.8 Harvesting hay at Packard Farms in Clare County, Michigan, Summer 2018. In the background there is a dilapidated barn structure which recaptures the historic nature of this rural location. Photograph by author.

importantly, corporate farms do not always adhere to the single-family centeredness established on family farms and are influenced by agricultural conglomerates and chemical companies who control the amount of product yield and economic interests of the farming system. While there is typically a farm manager leading the day to day operations of the corporate farm, there are sometimes several board members making decisions regarding it; none of which are required to be immediate family members. Additionally, the decisions made on corporate farms are driven by increased production and profitability. Economically speaking, larger farms and greater amounts of production lead to higher amounts of revenue. As a result of these factors, corporate farms employ a large workforce outside of the family farm structure because of their massive size. Furthermore, corporate farms tend to be a monocultural form of agriculture. By this I mean, they typically only generate one type of high revenue merchandise per season or acreage parcel (i.e. corn, soybeans, wheat, dairy and beef cattle, chickens, hogs, etc.). To do this they rely heavily on governmental reports about the projected economic climate pertaining to agriculture in order to make advance decisions regarding their corporate interests (i.e. when to plant, how much to grow, crop rotation schedules, etc.). While the current number of corporate farms in America is relatively small, the power they hold in the agricultural industry is immense.³³ More specifically, corporate farms tend to control the financial market which effects family farms and Young Farmers alike. It should also be mentioned here that most corporate farms in America

³³ According to the 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture, large farms with over \$1 million in sales account for only 4 percent of all farms, but 66 percent of all sales. This information reported by Mark Koba, "Meet the '4%': Small Number of Farms Dominates US," *CNBC*, last modified May 6, 2014, <https://www.cnbc.com/2014/05/06/state-of-american-farming-big-producers-dominate-food-production.html>.

were originally established as family farms who found it necessary to corporatize in order to sustain themselves in a shifting agricultural market.³⁴

1.3 Introducing Young Farmers

I imagine that both the family farm and corporate farm systems are what most readers are familiar with when considering farmscapes in America. Yet, throughout this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Young Farmers are becoming more visible in locations associated with agriculture. However, similar to other farmer/farming models, they are also complicated individuals to define. While many of them are altering the spaces, places, stereotypes, and types of agricultural products associated with these aforementioned representations, they also have their own unique styles, dynamic personalities, individual methods of practice, and do not conform to specific parameters easily (see Figures 1.9-1.13). Instead of using modern methods of agricultural technology like those used on family and corporate farms, it seems many Young Farmers prefer using hand tools and basic farm machinery implements to perform agricultural tasks. With some Young Farmers generating agricultural products on significantly smaller pieces of property than family and corporate farms, I argue large pieces of equipment (i.e. multi-use tractors, combines, seeders, etc.) are not necessary. Likewise, Young Farmers appear to prefer these simple methods because it allows their operation to produce a more diverse variety of crops. While they usually opt out of using large pieces of equipment, I argue they use technology in alternative ways. More specifically, they primarily utilize social media platforms and other

³⁴ Such as the example of the farm shown through the photos in Figures 1.4-1.8. Packard Farms was originally incorporated in 2001; yet, it was a family dairy farm before that time. For more information regarding how farming has changed over time, please refer to Chapter 2.



Figure 1.9 Using a hand operated broadfork, Sarah Longstreth harvests carrots at Good Stead Farm in Hope, Michigan, Fall 2017. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 1.10 A bird's eye view of Brother Nature Produce, a farm situated across several city lots near the Corktown district of Detroit, Michigan, Summer 2011. Photograph reproduced with permission by Olivia Hubert.



Figure 1.11 A man harvests beets by hand at Loma Farm in Traverse City, Michigan, Summer 2014. Photograph reproduced with permission Nic Theisen.



Figure 1.12 Working as a group, Corktown community members build raised beds for a future garden in Detroit, Michigan, Summer 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Ryan Anderson.



Figure 1.13 Noah Link of Food Field – Detroit sells a diverse variety of vegetables at the Hamtramck Farmers Market, Fall 2011. Photograph reproduced with permission by Noah Link.

forms of visual representations as communication, marketing and publicity tools.³⁵ Furthermore, these devices allow them to use representative images of their on-farm experiences, incorporate symbols usually attached to rural farm culture, and connect with consumers of their agricultural goods. By using these social media platforms to disseminate agriculture images, I argue many Young Farmers are able to depict their feelings of sentimentality and wistfulness regarding their profession and increase their sense of belonging within a farming community and to specific landscapes.

Most importantly, Young Farmers are best defined as people who are at least one familial generation removed from the farm. Put differently, their parents did not rely on agriculture as their principle source of income. Likewise, I argue many Young Farmers have the financial capacity take up farming due to the socio-economic status achieved before joining the agricultural industry. By this I mean, they have acquired land, property, or an education which allows them to perform their farming operations – a point of contention among many long-

³⁵ John Berger explains in *Ways of Seeing* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1977) that publicity is used to “transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more...this more, it proposes, will make us in some way richer...Publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour...Publicity begins by working on a natural appetite for pleasure. But it cannot offer the real object of pleasure in that pleasure’s own terms...Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product of opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be. Yet what makes this self-which-he-might-be enviable? The envy of others. Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness is judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamour. Being envied is a solitary form of reassurance...Publicity is, in essence, nostalgic. It has to sell the past to the future. It cannot itself supply the standards of its own claim. And so all its references to quality are bound to be retrospective and traditional. It would lack both confidence and credibility it is used as strictly contemporary language...The purpose of publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his own within it. It suggests that if he buys what is offering, his life will become better. It offers him an improved alternative to what he is,” 131-142.

established rural and urban environments, especially after the 1980s Farm Crisis and the Great Recession of 2008. With these ideas in mind, Young Farmers share characteristics with people commonly found in both rural and urban environments. Their ability to code-switch between cultural practices allows them to participate in multiple identities simultaneously, in turn permitting them to be lucrative in both settings. Effectively, participating in agriculture has allowed them to take advantage of the population drainage crisis presently occurring across multiple American settings.

Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, I will argue that Young Farmers have adopted an entrepreneurial perspective that commodifies rural material culture, incorporates agricultural goods and practices into their own identities, and sometimes capitalizes on low economic points in order to purchase land to raise livestock, plant crops, grow and harvest vegetables, and produce foodstuffs from their various agricultural endeavors. All these qualities point towards ways Young Farmers personify a lifestyle in which tradition, nostalgia, and familial closeness are conceived as values of promise like those addressed in connection with family farmers earlier. While Young Farmers tend to claim to be uninterested in the corporate farming model, they are however, entrepreneurial. For example, the consumer demand for novelty foods and the entertainment value at farm-to-table restaurants, assist in driving up profit margins and allow Young Farmers to be lucrative in an industry controlled by corporate farms. Put differently, Young Farmers usually spend their money and time growing a diverse set of artisanal goods and agricultural products to create the greatest amount of revenue usually from a much smaller piece of property. However, unlike some corporate farmers, Young Farmers are usually committed to organic practices, favor heirloom plants and heritage breeds over, and strive to deliver appealing, nutritious, and delicious products to their consumers. Generally, the

small-scale farms they inhabit promote environmental sustainability and provide a healthy habitat and natural ecosystem for their plants and animals, as well as future generations. While more specific case studies of Young Farmers will be addressed in later chapters, it is useful to explore the nostalgia of farm representations, and how rural agricultural environments as well as Young Farmers are depicted in contemporary magazines and media.

1.4 Problematizing and Embodying Agricultural Nostalgia

In *Greenhorns: The Next Generation of American Farmers*, editors Zoe Bradbury, Severine von Tscharner Feming, and Paula Manalo state, “Americans, by and large, no longer think of themselves as part of an agrarian nation. That is, most Americans are neither engaged in agriculture, not acculturated into its rituals, nor personally connected to its success.”³⁶ Yet, *Greenhorns* is beneficial to my analysis in multiple ways. Most importantly, it encapsulates the stories of a new generation of farmers and their shared experiences living in agricultural spaces. Most of these individuals did not grow up on a farm, yet they have chosen agriculture as their profession for various reasons. Moreover, the *Greenhorns* project illuminates how individuals have “recently, almost inexplicably, hitched their lives to agriculture” in order to depict why they think “there is still a thriving, driving need...to be makers of food, tenders of land, and protagonists of place.”³⁷ Further, this work argues, “Being or becoming a farmer is a thrilling act of creation...[Farmers] hold a space between the present and the future, between ecology and humanity...[They] are directly involved in the reconstitution of a local, resilient, and delicious

³⁶ Zoe Bradbury, Severine von Tscharner Feming, and Paula Manalo, eds., *Greenhorns*, 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

food systems...Farming is an expression of patriotism and hope.”³⁸ Through several personal essays in the book, individuals share how they “farm with methods and tools tested by hundreds of years...do physical, skill-based work; [and] actively and tangibly provide for a community, enabling an intimate connection to a place and its people.”³⁹ With these initial characteristics in mind, I see the *Greenhorns* project as a good entry point for critiquing other texts which have guided my investigation of Young Farmers and their use of nostalgia as an agricultural identity construction tool.⁴⁰

Nostalgia is a very common theme among Young Farmers and the publications with which I have associated them. Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy.”⁴¹ Nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension. However, instead of being directed towards the future, it references artifacts and cultures from the past to invoke emotions of sentimentality and wistfulness for people seeking it. Publications which use imagery attached to traditional farming culture appeal to these emotions in younger generations of people not associated with the farm because they insinuate a lifestyle of the past in more contemporary times. Additionally, they create spaces for the transformation of individuals to live experiences

³⁸ Ibid., 9-10.

³⁹ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁰ Other key works associated with this study are: Alissa Hessler’s *Ditch the City and Go Country: How to Master the Art of Rural Life From a Former City Dweller* (2017), Shannon Hayes’ *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* (2010), Jennifer Jordan’s *Edible Memory: The Lure of Heirloom Tomatoes and Other Forgotten Foods* (2015), Carolyn Sachs, et.al. *The Rise of Women Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture* (2016), and numerous popular media print and digital sources such as *Modern Farmer* magazine and urbanexodus.com described earlier.

⁴¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

which could be outside of their norm or reality. I think it may be helpful to articulate the problematic representations produced in agriculture further by using an issue of *Modern Farmer* magazine as a representative example of problematic agricultural nostalgia.⁴²

More specifically, in the Winter 2014/15 issue of the publication, Kaufman Mercantile's advertisement displays a woman nestled in a monochromatic wool blanket, sitting atop an antique wooden bench.⁴³ Additionally, there is another advertisement for Dansko Shoes in which a woman holding a bunch of carrots coyly smiles while harvesting her raised garden beds.⁴⁴ Yet, another ad promotes a course at Sterling College entitled "Artisan Cheesemaking in Vermont."⁴⁵ Lastly, there is a removeable insert section devoted to inspiring images of winter gifts which display artisanal products such as hand-thrown bowls from Tivoli Tile Works Pottery, another for Gierups Boot House Slippers, a "specially made-in-the-U.S., heat-treated, steel mulch fork," and even a Double Mackinaw Cruiser jacket manufactured by Filson, all of which range between \$40 upwards to \$415. The combination of these images leaves me with questions such as: what makes these shoes suitable for the modern farmer? Who is a "modern farmer" anyway? What

⁴² *Modern Farmer* magazine's website, modernfarmer.com, describes this quarterly publication as "existing for people who want to make a connection with what they eat, how they live, and the planet they reside on." Further, "it is for window-herb growers, career farmers, people who have chickens, people who want to have chickens and anyone who wants to know more about how food reaches their plate" date accessed December 17, 2018. From this description, it appears to be an all-inclusive agrarian periodical. However, with a deeper analysis of some of the products advertised in the publication and who the products are directed towards the magazine's exclusivity should be more clear. I have analyzed this magazine in much further depth in other publications such as "Pastiching the Pastoral: The Gentrification and Commodification of Rural America," (in review with Routledge, 2019).

⁴³ *Modern Farmer*, Winter 2014/15, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

about these advertisements appeals to someone participating in an agricultural lifestyle? Further analysis of similar publications such as Alissa Hessler's *Ditch the City and Go Country: How to Master the Art of Rural Life From a Former City Dweller*, urbanexodus.com, farmrun.com, *Acres U.S.A.* magazine, and numerous documentary films devoted to the sustainable agriculture industry have developed similar queries. Additionally, organizations such as the National Young Farmers Coalition, Young Agrarians, wwwoof.org, and social media promulgate the stereotypes tied to these sources on other media forms. Yet similar to *American Gothic*, I argue the quality of these images and the overall aesthetic of these print sources are creating an incomplete representation of the farm and farmers – ultimately, dismissing the complexity of their identities.

While the remainder of this dissertation gives a broader discussion of answers to the questions posed above, it should be understood here that the methods and research protocols for this project were developed with very specific farmer/farming imagery in mind. More specifically, I argue there are recurrent themes and compositional elements occurring in contemporary agricultural images which are reminiscent of historical print sources. Typically, these images use antique photo finishes like sepia tone (or other) filters, farmers use a chalkboard motif or creative fonts as marketing tools, the aesthetic quality of produce/goods (i.e. color coordinating/complimenting) to appeal visually, as well as the stylization of these images (i.e. color opacity, tints, and other Photoshop tools). Put differently, I see the types of images included in these publications contrasting between the “rational” and “romantic” versions of farmers which other scholars have referenced previously; yet, still combining these efforts to include a new figure (Young Farmers) in the American agricultural landscape.

Whereas, “romantic agrarians...emphasize the moral, emotional, and spiritual benefits agriculture and rural life convey to individual[s],” David Danbom explains rational agrarians

“stress the tangible contributions agriculture and rural people make to a nation’s economic well-being.”⁴⁶ Simply put, romantic agrarians hold the values of freedom, democracy, and economic security in high regard during times when American society have been threatened by consumerism, industrialization, and urbanization.⁴⁷ Young Farmers have revitalized these characteristics of the American farmer because of social, cultural, environmental, and political reasons. Similarly, they use socio-economic class status to explain rural and agricultural changes throughout history.⁴⁸ As R. Douglas Hurt notes:

Today, many Americans hail the virtues of rural living based not on Jefferson’s concept of an independent yeomanry anchored on the farm but for safety, privacy, and a slower-paced lifestyle. Yet the boundaries between rural and urban communities are often arbitrary and unclear. If the flight to the countryside for the benefits of rural living is agrarianism, it is a new agrarianism far different from the fundamentalism of the past. Although the ‘refugists’ to the countryside view the city as unnatural they seek rural life for escape or relatively cheap living rather than farming. Farming no longer offers virtues superior to other lifestyles and occupations.⁴⁹

While I agree with a portion of this lengthy passage, I argue that the informants positioned throughout the remainder of this dissertation do believe farming offers a virtuous lifestyle and take up this occupation in order to embrace those characteristics. Additionally, I argue Young Farmers encourage agricultural nostalgia and attempt to live a life fulfilled by accomplishing rural authenticity. Moreover, Young Farmers pursue similar virtues which Thomas Jefferson held dear while seeking spaces and places to promote self-sufficiency and environmental

⁴⁶ David Danbom, “Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America,” *Agricultural History* (Autumn, 1991), 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2002), 73.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 77.

sustainability by generating their own food, as well as producing food to be distributed at various market locations.

According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service section of Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas' (ATTRA) website:

Sustainable agriculture is a system that produces abundant food without depleting the earth's resources or polluting its environment. It is agriculture that follows the principles of nature to develop systems for raising crops and livestock that are, like nature, self-sustaining. Sustainable agriculture is also the agriculture of social values, one whose success is indistinguishable from vibrant rural communities, rich lives for families on the farms, and wholesome food for everyone.⁵⁰

Within the parameters of this definition, many of the values, principles, and agricultural practices Young Farmers addressed throughout the remainder of this dissertation are outlined. Moreover, I argue sustainable agriculture maintains environmentally-conscious attitudes and practices towards farming which allows for the continual use and reuse of materials and techniques to ensure the economic value and marketability of specific products. Therefore, by practicing sustainable agriculture methods Young Farmers seek to improve human welfare by protecting raw materials sources used for human needs and ensuring environmental, social, and economic needs are met with respect for future generations.⁵¹ Additionally, I argue that Young Farmers find it imperative to participate in some form of “sustainable” agriculture in order to be

⁵⁰ ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program is developed and managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and funded through a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural-Business Cooperative Service. The goals of this program are important to this project because they are “committed to providing high value information and technical assistance to [farmers, ranchers, etc.], involved in sustainable agriculture in the United States....[and] those who are economically disadvantaged or belong to traditionally underserved communities,” from “About Us,” *ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program*, last modified 2019, <https://attra.ncat.org/about-us/>.

⁵¹ Robert Goodland, “The Concept of Environmental Sustainability,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* Vol. 26, 1995: 1-24.

profitable or connected in any way – whether that is emotionally, economically, environmentally, or culturally speaking. They believe “sustainability” is paramount to their lifestyle, but also essential in selling their products to consumers where buzzwords like “organic,” “local,” “non-genetically modified (GMO),” “grass fed,” and “chemical-free” are dominating the food and agricultural industry. Due to these descriptors, I additionally argue that most Young Farmers produce a greater diversity of agricultural goods by practicing sustainable farming for a smaller market of consumers.

One of the primary spaces Young Farmers distribute their agricultural products is at farmers markets. Historically, farmers markets have provided a retail venue for farmers to sell their products directly to consumers. In Michigan, the state’s Farmers Market Association defines a farmers market as:

A public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling direct-to-consumer food and products which they have produced themselves. In addition, the market may include a variety of vendors as determined by the market management. A farmers market is organized for the purpose of facility personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, vendors, shoppers, and communities.⁵²

Currently, many Young Farmers find farmers markets profitable venues because they are usually located in close proximity to their farm’s growing location, which drastically lowers production costs (i.e. distribution, worker salaries, time spent away from the farm, etc.) especially when considering the small size of most of these farm operations. Furthermore, farmers markets still represent locations where consumers can have face-to-face interactions with the people growing the food they are purchasing. This direct line of communication between producer and consumer is advantageous in a variety of ways. Most especially, Young Farmers are usually willing to

⁵² “About Us: MIFMA,” *Michigan Farmers Market Association*, last modified 2019, <http://mifma.org/aboutus/>.

grow and raise specialty food products that specific consumers request. This is different from larger farms (both family farms and corporate farms) who usually neglect to provide a wide-ranging variety of products. Additionally, Young Farmers use farmers markets as community hubs where they create networks with other farmers in the area. Put differently, farmers market spaces are essential for Young Farmers to share knowledge about their craft and learn how to perform as farmers. Likewise, farmers markets create community links by developing social ties between rural and urban populations. More specifically linked to the three locations addressed in this dissertation, farmers markets provide alternative and additional venues for a larger variety of fresher, healthier, and seasonal food products to be distributed.

1.5 Chapter Outline

Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, my exploration of Young Farmers follows an interdisciplinary approach to address how they adopt symbols of identity and perform methods of belonging from rural farm culture. More specifically, this work shows how novice farmers align characteristically with family farmers and corporate farm models to integrate themselves into agricultural communities. Chapter Two, “Methodology and Literature Review” has many purposes. First, it outlines the multiple procedures used to acquire this data and the selection process of the farmers chosen to participate in the study. Primarily, I use ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, historical archives investigation, and visual analysis to examine the ways Young Farmers have developed strong agricultural systems in three farmers market locations in Michigan. Additionally, the chapter further explains who Young Farmers are by delineating several key texts which were beneficial in establishing their defining characteristics and theoretically grounding them. Subsequently, Chapter Two also provides an

overview of American agricultural history, considers some of the scholarly voices most valuable when contemplating theoretical methods of agriculture, and explains why the rural Midwest (and multiple locations in Michigan) is an excellent location to study Young Farmers.

Chapters Three through Five in this dissertation consider the geographical location of three separate farmers markets in Michigan as places where producers and consumers meet to cultivate networks of communication and profitability, while also introducing Young Farmers to spaces in which they develop their voice for negotiating changes occurring in the agricultural industry. Therefore, these chapters are quite similar and have two separate goals: to map connections between these farmers markets and act as a comparative study between the individual locations. Each chapter will include an overview of the community's demographic data, information related to agriculture in the region, an examination of the farmers market space, and a portrait of the farmers who participate in selling their products there.

In Chapter Three, "Middle of the Mitt: Midland Area Farmers Market", I focus on the seasonal, bi-weekly farmers market in Midland, Michigan. Centrally located in the Lower Peninsula's region of rich farmland, Midland is a community known for housing the headquarters to the Dow Chemical Company, one of the world's largest producers of plastics, chemicals, and agricultural products. Drawing employees from across the globe, this innovative corporation has been influential to the Midland (and regional) community for decades. Named after the corporations' founder, Herbert Henry Dow High School is the city's premier secondary school. Local entertainment and cultural draws like Dow Gardens, the Herbert H. Dow Historical Museum, the Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art, and the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library also hold the family name. In an otherwise gloomy regional economy, obtaining gainful employment at Dow Chemical is a distinctive class marker which denotes financial achievement.

More specifically, many Dow employees are stereotyped as holding higher education degrees, which usually provides an income greater than other local citizens falling below the poverty line. Likewise, Dow's employees and people residing in Midland tend to be younger than the aging demographic characteristically residing in surrounding, rural counties.⁵³ Therefore, Chapter Three highlights Young Farmers catering to the multiple levels of polarization and numerous tensions occurring among residents of the Midland, Michigan region. To accomplish this, I introduce two farms which distribute their produce at the Midland Area Farmers Market – one of the few alternative and specialty food exchange sites in the area. Unlike many of the regional family and corporate farms using Dow products to boost crop yields on their properties, Good Stead Farm and Smitten Mitten Farm generate a diverse variety of products using non-GMO, organic, and environmentally-friendly processes. Both represent a stark contrast from other local farming styles, as well as accommodate high-end clients with refined palettes and price-conscious consumers wary of big-box merchandiser mentalities which is affecting the social, cultural, environmental, and spatial dynamics of the local farmers market.

Located on the shores of Lake Michigan, the state's largest "growers only" market in Traverse City, Michigan is examined in Chapter Four, "Up North: Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market." As one of the state's most visited tourist destinations, the Traverse City area shines during the summer months and features several natural attractions and entertainment venues, including freshwater beaches, numerous forests, local vineyards, and a National Lakeshore. Given its unique geographical setting, one of the primary goals for this chapter is to emphasize the diversity of products generated in the region, as well as address why Young

⁵³ "Quick Facts: Midland County, Michigan," *census.gov*, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/midlandcountymichigan>.

Farmers find it a lucrative place for agricultural production. More specifically, this chapter further examines the drastic contrasts between upper class taste and creating affordable food alternatives for marginalized communities by drawing attention to three farms representative of the region, Loma Farm, Morganic Farm, and Providence Farm & CSA. By highlighting these three agricultural enterprises, this chapter emphasizes the exclusivity of some small farming operations, as well as the specific sites and clients to which they distribute. By doing so, this chapter further examines the roles agricultural romanticization and sentimentality play in the development of Young Farmer ideologies and their ties with local consumers.

Chapter Five, “In the City: Eastern Market” explores a historic commercial district in the urban environment of Detroit, Michigan. After a recent economic decline, Detroit is currently attempting to write its own comeback story – concentrating on its vibrant, hardworking, passionate residents as heroic characters.⁵⁴ However, Detroit’s racial, social, cultural, and environmental landscapes have changed dramatically over time, especially after the Great Recession of 2008 when the city’s population plummeted. Therefore, this chapter will illuminate some of the shifts occurring in the city, by focusing on the farmers market centrally located in the neighborhood of Eastern Market. More specifically, this chapter introduces four farm operations – Brother Nature Produce, ACRE, Food Field, and Maple Creek Farm – to discuss issues of racial difference, class privilege, and the migratory capabilities of becoming Young Farmers. Likewise, this chapter addresses the narrative shifts occurring amongst farming communities to include locations of greater urbanization, as well as express the multiple ways Young Farmers are altering these landscapes to produce sites of rural gentrification.

⁵⁴ Rebecca Kinney, “‘America’s Great Comeback Story’: The White Possessive in Detroit Tourism,” *American Quarterly* Vol 70 No 4 (Dec 2018), 777-806.

This dissertation concludes by reviewing my main arguments and the findings of my research to clarify the significance in the social, cultural, environmental, and migratory movements of Young Farmers. More specifically, I address how Young Farmers are changing the spaces and places associated with American agriculture, diversifying the products commonly distributed amongst American farmers, and creating shifts in farmer demographics by performing methods of belonging in farming communities across the United States. Likewise, this chapter summarizes why and how Young Farmers connect with the historical ethos of family farmers while also applying the entrepreneurial engagement of corporate farm models. However, the primary goal of this conclusion chapter is to address the political impact Young Farmers have on American agriculture. In light of recent media coverage of presidential politics, most are aware of the controversial issues of racism and sexism surrounding Donald Trump's presidency. However, it was not until midway through his first-term in office that Trump began to show signs of concern to the family and corporate farming community who (arguably) make up his voter base. Hence, the conclusion of this dissertation discusses common misconceptions surrounding the current state of American agriculture, by shedding light on some of the ways Young Farmers have influenced political change during President Trump's administration, as well as how they fit in to current and future discourses involving American agriculture.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Stemming from Repko's definition, I understand interdisciplinary studies to be a point of interaction between disciplines which permits complex questions to be answered, complex problems to be solved, and complex issues to be explained.⁵⁵ Interdisciplinary studies are not merely about mixing disciplines to acquire knowledge, but about what major themes were discovered when answering questions.⁵⁶ With that said, this study is interdisciplinary in multiple ways. Crossing the boundaries of several disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, environmental studies, economics, and material culture studies, this dissertation critically analyzes various types of texts to determine how and why Young Farmers are migrating to the agricultural industry to transform farming spaces and rural landscapes.

By incorporating theories and methods from several disciplines into this research, I gain the ability to identify overlapping themes (i.e. authenticity, identity, and belonging) and recognize the additive qualities Young Farmers contribute to the broader knowledge base of multiple disciplines pertaining to rural landscapes. Furthermore, studying the personality of Young Farmers from a disciplinary lens would mean to separate their dynamic characteristics into different categories, such as: restricting where they are situated in a historiographical context within the farming profession, putting limitations on their identifying factors of socio-economic privilege, and recognizing what confining structures they use to embody specific rural culture practices. However, this research synthesizes concepts of authenticity, identity, and belonging to

⁵⁵ Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008.

⁵⁶ Philip Deloria and Alexander Olson, *American Studies: A User's Guide*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

illustrate the social construction of Young Farmers and to explain how the combination of these elements is affecting shifts in farming communities across America, with special consideration giving to three locations in the rural Midwest. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this dissertation requires research and analysis through several broad theoretical approaches, including: rural studies, migration studies, spatial studies, memory studies, borderland studies, social constructionism, feminist standpoint theory, critical theory, and grounded theory.⁵⁷ More directly related, I combine approaches of historical archives research, visual text analysis, and anthropological and sociological qualitative methods to identify and investigate patterns of sociocultural practices, developmental structures, and constructed narratives related to Young Farmers who live in three specific Midwestern environments, participate in agricultural

⁵⁷ Although I mention most of these theories throughout this chapter, I should note here that feminist standpoint theory and critical theory are not mentioned further. Nonetheless, I think that they are worth including as guiding principles of my research because my approach and thought process regarding the subject of farmers and farming is structured around them. Epistemologically speaking, I feel like I have gained knowledge on the topic of farming over the course of my life based on my personal experience and history. While I do not automatically know more (or better) about agriculture simply because of my rural upbringing, I do believe that I am more aware of the problems occurring in the farming environment than non-rural citizens. More directly, this ties to feminist standpoint theory which suggests that an individual's perspectives are shaped by their personal experience and knowledge set, yet more information can always be gathered and learned. Some key works which guided these principles include: Dorothy Smith's *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (1989), Patricia Hill Collins' book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), Sandra Harding's *Whose Science/Whose Knowledge?* (1991), Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Women* (1991), Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis's article "Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge and the Situated Imagination" (2002), and Alison Wylie's article "Why Standpoint Matters" (2003). Additionally, critical theory evaluates society by critiquing and reflecting on various aspects of culture. This broad theoretical approach is at work throughout this dissertation in the various analyses of visual texts, scholarly texts, personal correspondence, and participant observation/interviews. The scholarly works which steered this approach are numerous, but key texts for this specific thread include: Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957) and *Image-Music-Text* (1977), Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Frederic Jameson's *Post-modernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1992), and Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (2007).

endeavors, and successfully contribute to the local economy because of their involvement in area farmers markets.

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Autoethnography and Positionality

The “self” is a key instrument used in research and making self-reflection is an integral part of the process.⁵⁸ Although I have resided in rural Michigan most of my life, this dissertation does not reflect as much about me living in Michigan as it does about me having knowledge of specific locations because I have lived there.⁵⁹ To better explain my positionality and how it affects this research, I use a three-part framework outlined in Shulamit Reinharz’s *Observing the Observer*, in which she suggests that a researcher must understand “what aspects of [themselves] are significant, what the meanings of those aspects of the self are, and how those meanings affect the way [they] can carry out [their] fieldwork.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, she contends there are three types of “selves” which exist within a study, “selves that are concerned with doing the research (research selves), selves that one brings to the field (personal selves), and selves the are created

⁵⁸ Shulamit Reinharz, *Observing the Observer: Understanding Our Selves in Fieldwork* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁹ As editors Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat suggest in *Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience in Ethnography*, “doing ethnography is inevitably intertwined with the rather subjective and deeply human being in the field.” Moreover, they explain the importance of doing fieldwork “at home” to use “self-knowledge,” memory, and competence as resources and to think of ourselves as “native” to a particular group of people to make connections with informants (New York: Bergahn Books, 2010), 2-12.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

in the field (situational selves).”⁶¹ I have applied variations of each of these “selves” throughout the fieldwork process.

My research self is related to my professional background as an analytical observer. Over an extended period, I saw changes happening in Michigan’s farming communities and desired to know how and why these fluctuations were occurring. Keeping these transitioning communities in mind with the proximity to my rural, childhood home, I chose to conduct fieldwork at multiple farmers market locations throughout Michigan. In preparation to do the fieldwork, I weighed many options of heavily trafficked farmers markets locations which I had visited previously. I also considered less populated locations and areas with which I was less acquainted. I thought about which specific environments had changed the most dramatically since I was a child. I consulted the available demographic information (socio-economic class, race, gender, etc.) for potential locations.⁶² All these features contributed to a better understanding of my informant selection process and how I was thinking about my research problem.

Along with other characteristics about my personality, being a rural Michigan native assisted me in addressing many sociocultural conditions pertaining to how my personal self is situated in this research. Most specifically, I believed that Midwestern farmers were usually stereotyped as heteronormative, patriarchal, white, middle-aged, working class men who rode tractors, wore bib-overalls and grew large crops of grain (usually corn, soybeans, and/or wheat)

⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

⁶² Reinharz explains that “research selves” begin with “the desire, opportunity, and preparation to do a study in a particular setting,” *Observing the Observer*, 15.

in rural environments.⁶³ Moreover, the educational experience and personal backgrounds of farmers usually shared similarities with my parents and grandparents. As someone who identifies as a white, heteronormative, working-class, higher-educated, female, my personal self-knowledge allowed me to gain an awareness of marginalized communities that do not fit the farmer model previously described and address why Young Farmers were voluntarily migrating to rural locations. Similarly, I was aware of specific socio-economic situations happening in the locations where I chose to perform my fieldwork because I had lived in an environment which was also struggling. Local news stations shared stories daily. More specifically, I was acquainted with the city of Detroit filing bankruptcy, the economic bifurcation surrounding Midland's employment powerhouse – Dow Chemical – and its role in the surrounding community, and the “liberal bubble” encompassing Traverse City's tourism industry.⁶⁴ Additionally, after constantly seeing farming equipment on Midwestern roadways, my personal self was already accustomed to the material culture and processes that farmers used and participated in to produce their goods, such as the debate over whether Farmall and John Deere tractors are better, the names of all the plow/plant/harvest implements towed behind them, the hand-held tools used on smaller landholding farms, and the climate change circumstances surrounding why hoop-houses, cold

⁶³ In this stereotype of farmers, I see an overlap with specific models outlined in various works of feminist theory written by bell hooks. Most notably, *Feminist Theory: Margin to Center* (South End Press, 1984).

⁶⁴ The term “liberal bubble” refers to the literal change in scenery, demographics, iconography, etc. which occurs when entering the city limits of Traverse City. More specifically, there is a drastic change in the socio-economic status of housing, Confederate Flags which adorn houses in nearby towns are swapped for LGBTQ flags in Traverse City – pointing towards the acceptance of marginalized communities, a noticeable decline in Donald Trump signs and an increase of Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders propaganda happened during the 2016 election. I will provide additional information about this term, as well as address the specific dynamics about other locations in the chapter pertain to each specific farmers market.

frames, and greenhouses are making a comeback – all of which was helpful in conversations with my informants.

Lastly, there were multiple situational selves that developed throughout the research process. Reinharz emphasizes that the emergence of various situational selves results during and after fieldwork.⁶⁵ At different times, I was a worker, stranger, or temporary person and sometimes a combination of them.⁶⁶ Other times I was a viewer, participating observer, tourist, neighbor, leaver, and/or consumer. Each of these situational selves allowed me to connect with my informants under different circumstances. During multiple situations, I had to tell participants that I was not a farmer, but also explain why I was interested in the subject of farming and their lifestyle. By sharing my personal story, it allowed them to know I was not in a position of authority, but that we shared equal power in the outcome of the study. Most importantly, these situational selves developed throughout the fieldwork process and allowed me to make connections between my informants in terms of geographical setting.⁶⁷

2.1.2 Mapping Perspectives and Geographical Connections

There is a map of Michigan taped to the wall above the desk in my office. When I began the interview transcription process, I placed a pink sticker on the exact spot where every farm site is located, labeled it with the farmer's name and what they called the farm, as well as listed the major goods produced at each location. When my informants would mention different farmers markets familiar to them, where they sold their products at, or where they have visited, I

⁶⁵ Reinharz, *Observing the Observer*, 205.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

placed a green sticker on new locations. Then, I would draw lines between the farms and these places. Additionally, I would draw lines when informants would mention new relationships (these have an orange sticker) whether that was from doing business with another farmer/farm, selling products to a separate wholesale market, or purchasing/borrowing supplies/equipment (all of which would get separate labels). Placing these stickers, labels, and lines allowed me to connect the dots between geographical locations, farming sites, and individual farmers. Moreover, mapping these connections allowed me to visualize how being a farmer, especially a Young Farmer, requires having a strong infrastructure of community – a dynamic, agricultural network of people, places, and things.

Another source that was helpful in mapping these perspectives was information gathered from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture from the last four census periods.⁶⁸ More specifically, I analyzed data concerning farmer demographics, what types of farms (animals and crops) were established in each location, and the economic interests of farming from Grand Traverse, Midland, and Wayne counties in Michigan to establish how agriculture in these locations changed over time. Most importantly, this census data provided maps of popular practices, demographic information, and farmland usage as it compares across the Midwest and further into the United States. Likewise, further analysis of two more contemporary surveys conducted by the National Young Farmers Coalition depicted how Young Farmers visualize themselves on the farm and construct new identities to develop their individual farming narratives.⁶⁹ Within this information, voices overlap with my fieldwork informants to explain why farming is an influential and beneficial profession. Most importantly, this survey

⁶⁸ The years for this census data range from 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012.

⁶⁹ These surveys were conducted in 2011 and 2017.

information aided with my definition of Young Farmers by further representing what stereotypical behavior allow people to self-identify as farmers.

2.1.3 Visual Ethnography and Digital Archives Analysis

To better understand what types of material culture items are being romanticized by farmers, I constructed a digital archive of mixed media representations of people, places, and things related to contemporary American agriculture. More specifically, I assembled a variety of digital and print media to complete a visual ethnography of Young Farmers. This method of “visual ethnography” was shaped by ideas outlined in Sarah Pink’s book *Doing Visual Ethnography*, in which she states:

Images are ‘everywhere’. They permeate our academic work and everyday lives. They inhabit and inspire our imaginations, technologies, texts and conversations. As mobile media becomes increasingly ubiquitous, images are embedded in the digital architectures of the environments we move through in our everyday routes. The visual is therefore inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, time, space, place, reality and truth. Ethnographic research is likewise intertwined with visual technologies, images, metaphors, and ways of seeing.⁷⁰

With this in mind, my study of Young Farmers would not be complete without interpreting how they use and adopt material culture artifacts related to American agriculture into their own lives. By studying digital and print media images I seek to develop a better understanding of the meanings and experiences of Young Farmers, as well as decipher how they learn and know agricultural information. As Pink suggests, “an image might invoke memory of an embodied affective experience, experiences also inspire images. Images are thus an inevitable part of the

⁷⁰ Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA; SAGE Publishing, 2013), 1.

experiential environment we live and research in.”⁷¹ Therefore, using aids of visual ethnographic images offered continuity after fieldwork and throughout the analysis process.

Using the method of visual ethnography to create Young Farmer narratives and construct a digital archive was a two-step process. First, I considered sources from a broad data set, including images from *Acres U.S.A.* magazine and *Modern Farmer* magazine, as well as its website and social media accounts. Additionally, images and videos from *farmrun.com*, *urbanexodus.com*, the National Young Farmers Coalition website and social media accounts, and the Young Agrarians website and social media accounts were gathered to illustrate a representation of who farmers have been, where they belong, how they have changed, and what they are becoming. Most of these popular media publications focus on the portrayal of farming community members to help readers develop a better understanding of their lifestyles. More specifically, *Modern Farmer* was founded in 2013 to “appeal to the person who wants to romanticize farming.”⁷² Focusing on production-scale organic and sustainable gardening, *Acres U.S.A.* has been in circulation for over four decades.⁷³ Likewise, websites *farmrun.com* and *urbanexodus.com* offer product marketing and promotional opportunities to people devoted to alternative agriculture and food merchandising. The National Young Farmers Coalition and Young Agrarians both represent alternative, ecologically-friendly, and organic farming networks currently being created in the United States and Canada respectively.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Christine Haughney, "A Magazine for Farm-to-Table", *The New York Times* September 17, 2013.

⁷³ *Acres U.S.A.*, last modified 2019, <https://www.acresusa.com/>.

Secondly, I looked at film documentaries such as *King Corn* (2007), *The Greenhorns* (2010), *Farmland* (2014), and *Farmers for America* (2017) to aid in creating a better conceptual and contextual description and understanding of Young Farmers given their similarities and differences in relation to other farmer models. Developing an analytical protocol for all of these sources, I examined the demographics (age, race, gender) of the people included in the images, what they were wearing, and the types of objects they were using to perform farm tasks. Also, I took note of the types of foods which were photographed, if photo editing filters were used, if there was a typeface embedded in the image or used for the subsequent article (noting what font was used), and the geographical (if listed) and situational setting (barn, field, on the seat of a tractor, etc.) for the images.

Within these print media sources, I saw overlapping themes related to nostalgic methods of farming in bucolic settings with rustic surroundings.⁷⁴ However, I also saw new trends of growing organic, sustainable, and artisanal crops with fresh design aspects and neoliberal economic principles. These contradictory images hinted that aspects of family farmers and corporate farm models were being adopted by Young Farmers to develop new methods for contemporary agriculture in America.⁷⁵ Therefore, I applied these rules to much smaller populations as the second step in developing my visual ethnography and digital archive. By this I

⁷⁴ This archive also includes historical images from familial papers housed in the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as well as photo records from the Midland County Historical Society, Traverse Area Historical Society, and the Detroit Historical Society to compare contemporary farmers with previous narrative imagery of agriculture in the United States.

⁷⁵ As defined in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, "An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved...every image embodies a way of seeing...our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing," 9.

mean, before I visited specific farmers market locations described in the next section of this methodology, I combed the internet using Google and Facebook to search for farmers and farms which fit within the narrative suggested by my working Young Farmer definition. Then, I visited each location (as described in the next section of this methodology) and sought out these particular farmers and farms. However, I remained open to additional informants who fit within the perimeters of the original protocol rules.

After I travelled to three separate locations, I did further internet searches to find as many print and digital sources as possible pertaining to each farmer and farm who was willing to participate in my study. These images, articles, stories, and blogposts were then analyzed with the same rules applied to the larger geographical archive listed above (i.e. demographics, overall aesthetic, and material culture depicted in the image). Essentially, this visual ethnography and digital archive analysis is important because it has informed how my arguments and questions have developed from the beginning of this dissertation process, but it also assisted me in finding individual farmers for this research. In the chapters that follow, I use the information gathered from this visual ethnography and digital archive analysis to explain what material culture characteristics are most representative of the space/place of “the farm” and which symbols of family farmers are adopted by Young Farmers to show how they have been integrated into three farming communities in Michigan.

2.1.4 Fieldwork – Research Sites and Study Participants

Taking a qualitative approach to this research, I performed semi-structured interviews with individuals who identified themselves as knowledgeable in small and sustainable farming practices in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. Through conversations with participants, I became

especially interested in how their continuation of farming processes and use of rural material culture artifacts benefits their current lifestyle culturally, economically, and environmentally. Farming communities near Traverse City, Midland, and Detroit, Michigan are significant to my research because they hold a diverse demographic of citizens (i.e. population size, socioeconomic class, race, age, and gender), as well as encapsulate a variety of weather climates ideal for multiple methods of farming and producing agricultural byproducts. Additionally, these locations have large, well-established, well-attended farmers markets where consumers meet with local producers on a regular basis.

I find individual semi-structured interviewing essential to this study because it allows participants to articulate personal knowledge about their roles within their communities and give specifics pertaining to their sustainability methods of agriculture.⁷⁶ Therefore, through the interview process my informants were permitted to share their expertise and identify specific components which they believed to be beneficial to my subject matter.⁷⁷ Based on an interdisciplinary literature review of the history of small farming practices, agricultural sustainability, and the activities of Young Farmers, I developed an IRB approved interview protocol which acted as a guide to initiate conversations with my participants.⁷⁸ I travelled to three farmers market locations to find informants: the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City, the Midland Area Farmers Market in Midland, and Eastern Market in Detroit. At each location I took into consideration the physical appearance of the people working and the

⁷⁶ H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2011), 156.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 157.

⁷⁸ See Appendix B for IRB approved interview protocol.

marketing items (i.e. banners, menu boards, price labels, baskets, crates, boxes, etc.) they brought with them to their booths. I took notes about the aesthetic they were trying to convey to their consumers and the farm with which they were associated. Afterwards, I searched for specific farms on social media to further connect individual farmers, whom I noticed representing patterns of nostalgia similar to the Young Farmers that I was developing in my Visual Ethnography and Digital Archives Analysis. Lastly, I contacted them via social media or email as an attempt to set up an interview. In this correspondence, I explained to my informants who I was, what my research pertained to, and why I thought the information they would have to share with me would be relevant to my study.

Eight people responded to my interview inquiry and agreed to participate in the study. These interviews were conducted both on the phone and in various locations across Michigan (usually on the farm of the participant) between July 2017 and November 2018. These individuals consisted of the farmers market managers from each location, two male and one female. Additionally, two female farmers selling their products at the Midland Area Farmers Market, as well as two male and one female farmer who distribute their goods at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market were interviewed. Usually, they were found using the analytic process described in the previous paragraph. However, in two cases from the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, farmers were contacted via a “snowballing sample” in which I received their contact information from one of the other participants. Additionally, I was only able to personally contact one male farmer from Eastern Market. However, there are numerous previously recorded interviews of farmers at this location which I analyzed and interpreted for the purposes of this research. More specifically, these interviews and videos were found after collecting the data from the digital analysis archives portion of this methodology, as well as after

I received notice that several of the farmers whom I personally contacted were unwilling to participate. The questions asked in the previously recorded interviews were similar to those addressed in my own interview protocol. Therefore, I did not think it was necessary to solicit anymore time from farmers in the Detroit area.

According to the demographic information these farmers and market managers shared, their ages range from 25 to 65. Everyone that I interviewed identified as white and have American citizenship. However, one of the female farmers previously interviewed in Detroit is African-American and married to a white male. At the time of the interview, all the female participants were in cohabitating relationships in which their male partners also work alongside them on the farm. One of the male participants was going through a divorce. All but one of the farmers has attended an institution of higher education. Most identify as working- to middle-class, with their annual salaries ranging from \$40,000 to \$100,000. Additionally, the farms that they work on vary in size between one vacant city lot and one-hundred eighty acres.

After conducting the interviews, I took a grounded theory approach to analyzing the data from the 230 pages of interview transcriptions.⁷⁹ First, I looked for keywords, repeated ideas, words and phrases, as well as conflicting statements, expressions, and frustrations to develop a

⁷⁹ As H. Russell Bernard writes in *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 1998), “The mechanics of grounded theory are deceptively simple: produce verbatim transcripts of interviews and read through a small sample of text (usually line by line). Identify potential themes that arise. As analytic categories emerge, pull all the data (that is, exemplars) from those categories together and compare them, considering not only what text belongs in each emerging category but also how the categories are linked together. Use the relationships among categories to build theoretical models, constantly checking the models against the data – particularly against negative cases. Throughout the process, keep running notes about the coding and about potential hypotheses and new directions for the research. This is called “memoing” in the vocabulary of grounded theory. Grounded theory is an iterative process by which the analyst becomes more and more “grounded” in the data and develops increasingly richer concepts and models of how the phenomenon being studied really work,” 608.

code to identify common themes. Next, I began writing theoretical memos – the transitional step between coding and analysis. By drawing connections between these themes, theoretical memoing allowed me to create a “concept map” and gain the ability to clarify, then link analytic themes and categories.⁸⁰ After performing this grounded textual analysis, I was able to understand why key segments of text emerged in the interviews and will use these examples to further develop theories and concepts throughout subsequent chapters of this dissertation.⁸¹ By performing this analysis, I have gained the ability to evaluate and interpret what each participant contributed to the overall discussion of farming and recognize how their personal practice of agricultural sustainability was beneficial to my study.

2.1.5 Historical Archives Analysis

In order to argue how Young Farmers romanticize the landscape of the farm and the family farmer, I will need to demonstrate how they have revitalized traditional aspects of agriculture and incorporated them into their daily lives. Therefore, my dissertation also includes a historiographical study of how farming has taken root in rural Michigan. To do this, I visited several archival libraries and historical museums in Michigan which hold collections pertaining to rural culture, namely at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing, Michigan, the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the organization Preservation Detroit in Detroit, Michigan. These archives house items dating back to the early 18th century pertaining to agricultural endeavors, such as the “Rural Michigan” and “Farm and Factory” exhibits at the

⁸⁰ Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 143.

⁸¹ Bernard, *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, 610.

Michigan Historical Museum. More specifically, these collections tie Michigan's heritage with the Land Ordinance of 1785, the Homestead Act of 1862, and the Dawes Act of 1887, all of which are significant in America's westward expansion and indicate farming was essential in Michigan's early development.

Several collections of papers at the Bentley Historical Library shed light on the material culture of farmers from Michigan's agricultural heritage, such as the James Galbraith Photography collection, the Ella Fuller Photography Collection, the Leroy Barnett Photography Collection, and various other farming community family member papers. The Michigan State Grange Records from 1874-2002 and the Michigan Farmers Union Papers from 1948-2008 are also housed in the archives of the Bentley Historical Library. Most importantly, I discovered Pamela DeWeese's dissertation entitled *The Detroit Eastern Farmer's Market: Its Social Structure and Function* (1975) in the collection here. This document has been helpful because it illuminates a historical depiction of the location of Eastern Market and allowed me to better understand how the neighborhood, the farmers market space, and the producers and consumers have changed over time.

The organization, Preservation Detroit offers a tour of Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan. This tour provided both historical and contemporary scenes of how the agricultural industry in Michigan migrates from the rural to the urban environment. More specifically, this tour gave insight into the history of Eastern Market – one of the main locations of my fieldwork, and the oldest and largest historic public market in the United States.⁸² Most importantly, this

⁸² "Eastern Market," *Eastern Market Corporation*, date accessed May 2, 2016. <http://www.easternmarket.com/>.

tour allowed me to have a guided experience of Eastern Market and understand what historic relics make it so fascinating, as well as learn about some of the exciting plans for its future.

Another key historic collection relevant to my research is located at the Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. More specifically, housed in this archive are the personal papers to former Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz. Making many large policy changes about American agriculture during his presidential cabinet tenure, Butz was a boisterous and prominent government official whose voice aided in the development of some of the conservative ideals of mid-20th century farmers. Essentially, his agricultural policy changes initiated large-scale corporate farming and ended New Deal programs – which gave security to family farmers in a time of need. Therefore, this collection also provided several documents which alluded to how the downfall of the family farmer originated and the beginnings of the 1980s Farm Crisis.

Lastly, there are several local historical societies such as the Traverse City Historical Society in Traverse City, Michigan, the Herbert D. Doan Midland County Historical Society in Midland, Michigan, and the Detroit Historical Society in Detroit, Michigan that link agriculture as an important endeavor to the history of their separate communities. The historical information found at these locations about each farmers market was beneficial in understanding the institutional importance of the market for its community. At each location, I looked at photographs and documents like those I looked at in other archives. However, with this additional information, I was able to ascertain how the physical characteristics of each farmers market site and the farmers who sold there had changed over time. With these additional sources, I hoped to better understand how the increasing market needs of farmers and consumers were driving forces for the current expansion in sustainable American agriculture.

2.2 Literature Review

The timeless acts of virtuous farmers are exhibited in Paul Harvey's 1978 Future Farmers of America Keynote Address titled, "So, God Made a Farmer," in which he summarizes the quaint, nostalgic, and romantic nature of the profession of agriculture and the people who brand themselves as farmers.⁸³ In the speech, Harvey explains some of the longstanding familial connections, time-honored agricultural processes, and various community obligations linked with the overall image of many heritage farmers. Like any socially constructed performance, farming and the acts of individual farmers are highly contextualized within theoretical frameworks of culture and history – which does not go unrecognized in Paul Harvey's depiction. Historically, farmers have performed specific characteristics of identity and methods of belonging in the rural environment locations stereotypical of the farm. While American farmers and farming spaces have changed drastically over time due to altered socio-economic class structures and environmental reasons, the fundamental motivations for Midwestern farming and materials and techniques used to farm appear to remain the same. Primarily, these stimuli are driven by a wide range of aesthetic, economic, social, and environmental sustainability factors which are exhibited best in further analysis of the figure of the Young Farmer. However, before I layout specific case studies displaying these characteristics in later chapters, it is necessary to address the theoretical perspectives attributed to these identities.

2.2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

In significant ways, my strategies to explore rural areas and the people who reside in them are theoretically grounded in what Gloria Anzaldua has referred to as "Borderlands

⁸³ See Appendix C for Paul Harvey's Keynote Address.

Theory,” what Homi Bhabha considers “in-between” spaces, and what other scholars have outlined as social constructionism. While Borderlands Theory informs my argument involving the liminality of the farm, social constructionism relates more to the people occupying those spaces. Regarding social constructionism, Erving Goffman’s study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* are models which I find similar to my own arguments. However, other scholars’ have challenged these previous claims and lead me to question the authenticity of performed identities especially involving people who reside in the liminal spaces of rural America. Examples of contradictory works will also be addressed here, including: Amanda Koontz’s article “Constructing Authenticity: A Review of Trends and Influences in the Process of Authentication in Consumption” and Andrew Potter’s book *The Authenticity Hoax: Why the “Real” Things We Seek Don’t Make Us Happy*.

Gloria Anzaldua’s book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* covers a broad array of subjects pertaining to the invisible geographical, social, economic, historic, and cultural barriers of many marginalized groups of people. In this influential work, Anzaldua remaps the idea of the “border,” giving special consideration to physical and psychological boundaries, as well as geographical and personal identity tropes. She argues that there is not a strict binary between one type of identity or another, but a variety of complex transitional spaces to explore. About this concept Anzaldua states, “A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.”⁸⁴ To put this more precisely, she envisions “the border” as an “in-between”

⁸⁴Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 25.

space. More specifically, “the border” is a site to begin the process of seeing, knowing, thinking, and comprehending, rather than a strict boundary. Linking this prolific work to my dissertation, the concept of the border applies to notions related to farming environments because of the wide array of intersections created from the modern and traditional practices used in agriculture, as well as the various overlapping demographic shifts occurring between rural and urban spaces.

Similarly, as Homi Bhabha argues “‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”⁸⁵ Therefore, as I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, “the farm” can be defined as a liminal (in-between) space especially regarding the transformative quality of the space. Put differently, farms are quite literally spaces for people to grow things, even if that is interpreted as merely generating new ideas, methods, concepts, or personal evolution. Likewise, farmers (especially Young Farmers) reside somewhere located on those borders. More accurately, the farm is a place that can change based on the farmers who occupy it and includes multiple boundaries – social, conceptual, geographical, and economic – all of which are socially constructed and malleable.

In *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann explain that people give themselves meaning by living in a specific place, but they also give meaning to that place by displaying their personal styles in that location.⁸⁶ All of this is accomplished through demonstrating basic social and cultural norms,

⁸⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.

⁸⁶ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1966).

identifying with these traits, then demonstrating those models through language and practice to other people. In this regard, I contend most people living in rural locations have some knowledge of agricultural endeavors based on the traditions that have been practiced in those locations throughout history. Similarly, I argue some people who live in rural communities take on specific attributes of that location and commonly perform as a “farmer” represented in those locations. Likewise, performing as a farmer is rationalized by the personal style and material culture of the people who reside in specific rural locations.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman claims “when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed.”⁸⁷ Essentially, he contends that people use stereotypes and assumptions based on their previous knowledge of similar people to predict how individuals will behave and after enough practice of a specific social role, individuals are typically distinguished with those same characteristics.⁸⁸ Therefore, I argue that it is easier for people to become farmers by surrounding themselves with other individuals who share similar interests in agriculture and after persuading enough of the surrounding community to believe that an accurate performance has been achieved it makes an individual believe that they are indeed a farmer. Likewise, living in rural communities causes people to perform in a different way than they would if they lived in other geographic locations because they perform social norms that are relevant to the rural landscape. However, living in rural America is not mutually exclusive to becoming a Young Farmer.

⁸⁷ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (New York: Anchor Publishing, 1959), 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Further outlining the theory of social constructionism, Amanda Koontz defines two separate methods of authentication.⁸⁹ The first concept she explains is “otherizing” – the process “in which producers and patrons represent products as authentic for their derivation outside the mainstream culture, including foreign, minority, and subcultural resources.”⁹⁰ The second, she explains is “traditionalizing” – a process “which involves constructing authenticity by creating a sense of connectedness between products and consumers’ perceptions of the past.”⁹¹ These ideas inform this research on Young Farmers, with both of these definitions influencing the notion that I describe as “traditionalizing other.” More specifically, they perform as farmers in traditionalized, rural environments but are othered by the people who have lived in those locations longer. By this I mean, since they have relocated to areas in financial decline, they are not viewed as authentic farmers when they first arrive. They are usually viewed by neighboring farmers as outsiders. More specifically, Young Farmers are pastiching traditionalized areas of rural agriculture and becoming farmers by participating in the customs associated with that location. However, in locations of greater urbanization Young Farmers may be viewed as performing authentically rural because they differ from other populations in that area.

Andrew Potter argues in *The Authenticity Hoax: Why the “Real” Things We Seek Don’t Make Us Happy* that authenticity is an unobtainable concept, one which creates problems for people who are attempting to reach the “realist” capacity of a performed identity. More specifically, he argues, “our misguided pursuit of the authentic only exacerbates the problem. We

⁸⁹ Amanda Koontz, “Constructing Authenticity: A Review of Trends and Influences in the Process of Authentication in Consumption,” *Sociology Compass* Vol 4 No 11 (2010), 977.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 978.

⁹¹ Ibid.

need to find a way forward, to an individualism that makes its peace with the modern world while allowing for a meaningful life free of nostalgia, reactionary politics, or status-seeking.”⁹² Furthermore, he explains that the “contemporary struggle for genuine, authentic forms of living cannot be the solution to [the] problem, because it is the cause.”⁹³ Arguably, Young Farmers are creating a space of greater marginalization by following the example of previous farms and demonstrating similar actions. Yet, they are also leaving room for rural communities to be redefined and the “American farmer” to be represented in a new light. Before elaborating on these concepts further, it is first necessary to give a brief history of rural America (specifically the Midwest and the locations directly related to this study) and the “authentic” farmers who have stereotypically inhabited those regions.

2.2.2 A Brief History of American Agriculture

David Danbom writes in *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*, “At the time of the American Revolution, over 90 percent of Americans lived in a rural setting, and the vast majority of them drew at least part of their livelihood from farming.”⁹⁴ However, it was the era between the American Revolution and the onset of the Civil War which was the most pivotal time for the American farmer. Further, it was during this period that state and national governments developed infrastructural transportation routes, imported plant and animal varieties, and prospected lands in the American West for potential agricultural resources – all giving more

⁹² Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: Why the “Real” Things We Seek Don’t Make Us Happy*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 15.

⁹³ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁴ David Danbom, *Born in the Country*, xi.

opportunity to the people residing in rural areas. Hence, the farmer became America's champion in the early decades of the United States. Danbom argues:

[T]he farmer was transformed into the purest representative of the finest people on earth and a person on whose [sic] well-being the health of the [R]epublic depended...American [farmers] contended that agriculture and rural life were superior to all other occupations and styles of life and that farm people were better, in every way, than others.⁹⁵

Thus, farming was a legitimate occupation in the early ages of the Republic, producing commodities that met the basic needs of its citizens. Their connection to nature made "rural people purer, more moral, and more respectful of God," as well as aided in the assertion of their independence and superiority.⁹⁶ Rural Americans endeavored to become self-sufficient and successful, leaning on the fruitfulness of their land to provide for their families' economic welfare, many principles of which led them to be referred to as "Agrarians."

In the early Republic, Agrarians believed farming was the best way of life and willfully sought to avoid commercial agriculture, preferring to produce goods only for subsistence rather than to grow larger amounts for greater economic gain.⁹⁷ As R. Douglas Hurt explains in *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, "the agrarian tradition has long been recognized as central to the American experience."⁹⁸ Perhaps, the best-known of the Agrarians was Thomas Jefferson.⁹⁹ Jefferson believed that living in a rural location was superior to residing in the city and that "the ownership of land was a natural right and made the small-scale farmer the bastion

⁹⁵ Ibid., 65-66.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 67-68.

⁹⁷ R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 72.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Thomas Jefferson writes extensively about his experiences as an agrarian in his historical work, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).

of freedom and independence, the vanguard of American democracy.”¹⁰⁰ Along with being associated with the Agrarians, Nancy Isenberg recognizes that Jefferson’s “style was that of a gentlemen farmer.”¹⁰¹ About all of these agricultural labels, Isenberg also states:

The occupation [Jefferson] loved, the descriptor that most delighted him, was *cultivator*. This word meant more than one who earned his bread through farming; it drew upon the eighteenth-century idiom that arose from the popular study of natural history. To cultivate meant to renew, to render fertile, which thus implied extracting real sustenance from the soil, as well as good traits, superior qualities, and steady habits of mind. Cultivation carried with it rich associations with animal breeding and the idea that good soil led to healthy and hearty stocks (of animals or people). Proficiency in tapping the land’s productive potential had the added benefit of improving the moral sense.¹⁰²

The cultural, political, and social importance of farmers was stressed by the Agrarians.¹⁰³ By 1800, approximately four out of five Americans were partaking in some form of agricultural production.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, “one farm family [had the ability to] supply food for only one other family on average.”¹⁰⁵ Partially due to this booming industry, American leaders believed it was necessary to develop agricultural policy and to encourage western expansion.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 authorized the survey and sale of the land in the public domain.¹⁰⁶ More specifically, this piece of legislation developed townships into pieces of property which were six miles square and further divided into thirty-six square sections of 640

¹⁰⁰ Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 72.

¹⁰¹ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2017), 86.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰³ Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 69.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm*, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 86.

acres each. These one-mile square sections were then offered for sale at the minimum price of \$1 per acre at public auction. However, most farmers could not afford this amount and much of the land was acquired by speculators who then further broke down the large quantities of property to sell with greater ease.¹⁰⁷ Overall, the Land Ordinance of 1785 gave farmers the right to acquire an amount of land necessary to produce larger amounts of crops in a country with a steadily increasing population. Overtime, other governmental acts were passed to encourage farmers with the financial capacity to participate in land acquisition such as The Homestead Act of 1862 and the Dawes Act of 1887. Additionally, the creation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862 was initially concentrated on agricultural research, the formation of land-grant colleges to provide education for people intended to take up agricultural professions, and the establishment of the USDA Extension service thereby furthering the importance of the profession of agriculture for the nation.¹⁰⁸

As historian David Danbom states, “The years between 1870 and 1900 were a time of dramatic expansion in rural America...The number of farms increased from 2.66 million to 5.74 million. Acres of farmland jumped from 407.735 million to 841.202 million. And the total value of farm property rose from \$9.4 billion to \$20.4 billion.”¹⁰⁹ By 1900, approximately 60 percent of the population of the United States lived in rural areas and the farmers located there accounted for about 40 percent of the nation’s workforce.¹¹⁰ The ever-increasing interest in the nation’s agricultural industry resulted in the professions golden age in the first two decades of the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰⁸ Wood, *Survival of Rural America*, 144.

¹⁰⁹ Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Wood, *Survival of Rural America*, 3.

twentieth century. Farm income more than doubled and the average farm value more than tripled.¹¹¹ About the exuberant time, Willard Cochrane writes, “Farm product prices were high and stable. The terms of trade were strongly in the favor of farmers. The country was settled. The world was a peace. Hard work, thrift, and ‘right thinking’ had indeed paid off for farmers; the good life was a reality.”¹¹² However, in 1920, the Great Depression hit agricultural endeavors almost a full decade before other economic industries in the country.

As with many other American economic sectors, the Great Depression brought hardship and financial strife to rural America and life on the farm. During this time, self-sufficiency became an even more common practice among many people living in rural areas. Farmers (and their wives) were encouraged to “can vegetables, butcher and preserve meat, raise poultry, keep dairy cattle, and engage in home manufacturing.”¹¹³ Furthermore, this “live-at-home,” savvy lifestyle highlighted some of the various benefits of rural living, which in turn attracted many of the unemployed manufacturers living in urban settings (i.e. workers in the Detroit, Michigan automobile industry) to flock to the countryside. Likewise, there was a movement of more than 750,000 people to rural areas, consisting of some young African-American people who originally participated in the Great Migration of the 1920s – returning to farm life after their loss of jobs in American cities.¹¹⁴ Additionally, although the output amounts of goods produced on rural farms

¹¹¹ Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 161.

¹¹² Willard Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 200.

¹¹³ Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 200.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

remained constant during the Great Depression, farm income declined by roughly 40 percent.¹¹⁵

This is noteworthy to mention here because it identifies some of the factors causing the commercialization of United States agriculture and led to the creation of numerous governmental policies and subsidy agencies associated with the New Deal Era, such as the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), the Farm Security Administration (FSA), and the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA).¹¹⁶

Between the years 1930 to 1938, the American federal government undertook the greatest amount of initiatives and inaugurated the most aid programs in agricultural history.¹¹⁷ During this time, Paul Conkin states, “Farmers received payments for cutting production and subsidies to carry out necessary conservation practices; they received price supports to carry out necessary conservation practices; they received price supports for five basic commodities and crop insurance as a form of disaster relief.”¹¹⁸ The abundance of programs led to confusion among

¹¹⁵ Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture*, 101.

¹¹⁶ All these organizations provided financial aid for in need farmers. About the New Deal programs, David Danbom writes in *Born in the Country* that they “signaled a dramatic shift in the relationship between the federal government and rural America. In contrast to Hoover, who offered little to farmers but support for cooperation, Roosevelt launched a program for agricultural recovery based mainly on acreage reductions and price supports. His administration also developed programs to enhance security for farm property, supplement credit resources, encourage cooperation, and insure crops against weather-related losses,” 206. Likewise, Willard Cochrane states in *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* that the Farm Security Administration was founded to “help low-income farm families on low-production farms become viable commercial operators,” 321. In his agricultural history overview, R. Douglas Hurt addresses the Congressional passing of the Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1933, stating it was “designed as a ‘farm relief’ measure to restore parity purchasing power...[and] had the responsibility of paying farmers to limit the production of seven basic commodities – wheat, cotton, corn, hogs, rice, tobacco, and dairy products,” 288.

¹¹⁷ Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm*, 76.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

farmers regarding qualifying measures; yet, it was widely understood that the common base measure was the level of past production. Put differently, large farm operations received more government subsidies than small farmers which sustained the gap between the two models. Likewise, “production controls made it more difficult for small farmers to compete with larger [farms,] and large and more efficient farmers gained the benefits from farm policies.”¹¹⁹ While some scholars contend that New Deal farm policies benefited the residents of rural America, I agree with Conkin’s argument – these institutions accommodated large-scale farms at the expense of small-scale farmers because they increased the value of farmland and thusly, made the profession of farming more exclusive.¹²⁰ Moreover, it was these policies and the technological revolution of the early 20th century which caused farming to become a highly commercialized and extremely capitalized industry.

The corporate farming model really became most recognizable during Earl Butz’s tenure as Secretary of Agriculture in the 1970s. Butz is notorious for giving voice to phrases such as “get big or get out” or “plant fencerow to fencerow” to push for the overplanting, centralized methods of agribusiness farming. Also, he put an end to New Deal agricultural policies, which had sought to protect small, family farmers from economic catastrophe.¹²¹ Essentially, these

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Nathan Rosenberg and Bryce Stucki, “The Butz Stops Here: Why the Food Movement Needs to Rethink Agricultural History,” (Journal of Food, Law, and Policy, 2017), 17. Additionally, a much larger discussion surrounding the Earl Butz era agriculture and food policy changes can be understood by reading such scholarly works as: Willard Cochrane and Mary Ryan’s *American Farm Policy: 1948-1973* (1976), Joel Solkoff’s *The Politics of Food* (1985), Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006), Daniel Imhoff, et. al. *Food Fight: The Citizen’s Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill* (2007), Norman Wirzba’s *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land* (2010), Wenonah Hauter’s *Foodopoly: The Battle Over the Future of Food and Farming in*

programs worked like this: when crop production was high and market prices began to fall, the governmental organizations would pay farmers to leave some of their land uncultivated. When prices were high, subsidy payments ended, and crops would be planted again. The government would also buy and store farmers excess grain. The goal was to control the market and benefit both producers and consumers. However, during Butz's tenure as Secretary, farmers adopted new technological processes and substituted chemicals and machines for human labor – both of which drastically reduced their costs of production. With these lowering overhead costs, corporate farmers were able to increase their crop supply and flood the market with cheaply produced grain.¹²² With these grain surpluses, Butz was able to promise American farmers foreign sale opportunities and arranged a large-scale trade agreement with the Soviet Union in 1972.¹²³ The Soviets purchased the entire U.S. grain reserve and then, grain prices skyrocketed which caused farmers to panic. Many small, family farmers spent the remainder of the 1970s acquiring debt to buy more land, equipment, and farming supplies to keep up with the large conglomerates who were controlling the markets.¹²⁴ Consequently, failure to meet these new

America (2012), Paula Dail's *Hard Living in America's Heartland: Rural Poverty in the 21st Century Midwest* (2015), and the documentary film *King Corn* (2007).

¹²² Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture*, 137.

¹²³ Additional sources about the 1972 U.S.-Russia grain trade deal include: Martha Hamilton's entry "The Great American Grain Robbery & Other Stories" (1972), James Trager's book *Amber Waves of Grain* (1973), Clifton Luttrell's report "The Russian Wheat Deal – Hindsight vs. Foresight" (1973), P.R. Chari's article "US-USSR Grain-Oil Deal" (1975), James Trager's book *The Great Grain Robbery* (1975), and Peter Rankin's article "The Grain Embargo" (1980).

¹²⁴ Osha Gray Davidson, *Broken Heartland: The Rise of America's Rural Ghetto*, 31-32. Other sources which informed this argument are: Paul Rosenblatt's *Farming Is in Our Blood: Farm Families in Economic Crisis* (1990), Paul Lasley et. al. *Beyond the Amber Waves of Grain: An Examination of Social and Economic Restructuring in the Heartland* (1995), Kathryn Dudley's *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland* (2002), Howard Kohn's

standards resulted in unsuccessful payments to lenders, which usually forced many family farmers to leave their land and profession for alternative industries.

In the first half of the 1980s, many family farmers were plagued by a depression which resembled that which had occurred in the 1920s. There were several contributing factors to this agricultural decline; many of which were linked to governmental administration officials failing to agree on the governmental farm policies stated earlier.¹²⁵ After the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the United States ended their massive trade agreement.¹²⁶ American farmers were affected drastically by this grain embargo which caused a drastic collapse in market prices and then, a massive drought hit the Midwest in 1983.¹²⁷ All of these factors contributed to

The Last Farmer: An American Memoir (2004), and Sarah Smarsh's *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* (2018).

¹²⁵ Other factors include: technological innovations in crop science and farm management systems. Basically, any form of progress was the root cause of the rural crisis. This argument can be further analyzed through reading these works: Mary Neth's *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (1998), Ron Kline's *Consumers in the Country: Technology and Social Change in Rural America* (2000), Jerold Apps *Every Farm Tells a Story: A Tale of Family Farm Values* (2005), J.L. Anderson's book *Industrializing the Corn Belt: Agriculture, Technology, and Environment, 1945-1972* (2008), and Jonathan Levin's *Where Have All the Horses Gone?: How Advancing Technology Swept American Horses from the Road, the Farm, the Range and the Battlefield* (2017).

¹²⁶ Peter Rankin, "The Grain Embargo," *Washington Quarterly*, 141-153. Among a vast amount of newspaper clippings from the time, more information about the Russian grain embargo can be read at: Congressional Hearing transcripts of "The Impact of the Soviet Grain Embargo on Rail and Barge Transportation: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Economic Growth and Stabilization of the Joint Economic Committee" (1980), J.R Tarrant's article "Food as a Weapon?: The Embargo on Grain Trade Between USA and USSR" (1981), Congressional Hearing transcripts of the "Economic Impact of Agricultural Embargoes: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Foreign Agricultural Policy of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry" (1982), and Yael Aronoff's article "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion" *The Political Conversion of Jimmy Carter* (2006).

¹²⁷ More information about the 1983 drought in the Midwest include: Congressional hearing transcripts of the "Effects on the 1983 Drought on American Agriculture Hearings

plummeting land prices, high interest rates on home and equipment loans, and a record numbers of foreclosures were reported. Likewise, high oil prices negatively affected the agricultural industry.¹²⁸ About this economic decline Paul Conkin writes:

In five years, from 1980 to 1985, total farm exports fell by half. In 1980 alone, farm income fell by 46 percent, a faster rate than during the Great Depression. Land prices, which had risen rapidly in the booming 1970s, fell sharply from around \$1,200 an acre in 1980 to less than \$700 in 1988. Exuberant farmers, many of whom has recently purchased new self-propelled combines or bought out neighboring farms, were suddenly faced with bankruptcies. Sixteen percent of commercial farmers were financially stressed by 1985. The income support programs and federal loans helped most farmers avoid bankruptcy...but up to 300,000 left farming and, in many cases, sold their land.¹²⁹

This movement was similar to that which occurred in the 1930s Depression, but at a much greater scale. Frequently, these overburdened farmers were forced to migrate to areas of greater economic promise, sometimes in locations surrounding urban industry. Typically, farmers who remained in rural areas supplemented their income with other occupations away from the farm. However, sometimes the economic crisis even spread into the cities, where industrial plants which were manufacturing farm equipment and machinery were also closed. Workers were laid off by the thousands, which forced them to move even further away from small town America.¹³⁰

Before the Subcommittee on Agricultural Production, Marketing, and Stabilization of Prices of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry” (1983).

¹²⁸ Steve Murdock, et.al., “Impacts of the Farm Crisis on Rural Community,” Routledge, 30-49. Other sources pertaining to the American oil shortage in the late 1970s include: Rodney Allen and Robert Litke’s article “If There is an Energy Crisis, Then...” (1979), David Hawdon’s work *The Energy Crisis: Ten Years After* (1984), Daniel Horowitz’s *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s: The “Crisis of Confidence” Speech of July 15, 1979* (2004), Xiaobing Li and Michael Molina’s two-volume work *Oil: A Cultural and Geographic Encyclopedia of Black Gold* (2014), and Meg Jacobs’s book *Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics in the 1970s* (2016).

¹²⁹ Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm*, 132-133.

¹³⁰ *The Farm Crisis* documentary from Iowa Public Broadcasting, 2013. Additional sources regarding the 1980s Farm Crisis include: Gilbert Fite’s article “The 1980s Farm Crisis”

Their rural way of life was destabilized, and their children usually did not experience the same idyllic lifestyle qualities as their parents sometimes had in small town America. The feelings of failure that many of these farmers and their future generations experienced over these tragic circumstances would reflect negatively on rural American culture for years to come.

By the turn of the millennium, the economic, demographic, and agricultural decline of rural America had become even more apparent. David Danbom states, “In 2003 there were 2.127 million farms in the United States, averaging 441 acres in size. Of these farms, 56.2 percent sold produce valued at \$10,000 per year. Only 15.5 percent, of a bit more than 325,000 farms, were considered economically significant, meaning that they marketed more than \$100,000 worth of produce per year.”¹³¹ Compared to the U.S. housing market and other financial divisions, the agricultural sector was not hit as hard during the Great Recession of 2008.¹³² Similar to other U.S. Department of Agriculture information, this evidence could be considered controversial because these statistics reflect numbers primarily sourced by corporate farm models and do not represent small-landholding farmers who rarely participate in the world market. Regardless, the damage done to small-landholding, family farmers during the 1980s Farm Crisis had not been alleviated. Property values continued to decline, and the nation’s rural drain progressed. During the Great Recession of 2008, people continued to flee the countryside for the prospect of urban

(1986), Neil Harl’s book *The Farm Debt Crisis of the 1980s* (1991), Glen Elder and Rand Conger’s *Families in Troubled Times: Adapting to Change in Rural America* (1994), Jane Adams’s book *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed* (2002), and Ronald Jager’s *The Fate of Family Farming* (2004).

¹³¹ Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 258.

¹³² This information is based off the USDA’s Economic Research Service report, “The 2008-2009 Recession and Recovery: Implications for the Growth and Financial Health of U.S. Agriculture” by Paul Sundell and Mathew Shane.

industry and more opportunities for employment. As Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas state in *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*, “more than seven hundred rural counties...lost 10 percent or more of their populations since 1980.”¹³³ Yet, “despite the emptying out of the Heartland and the myriad forces conspiring against rural areas’ backbone industries, the nation’s belief in the insulated vibrancy of small towns appear[ed] oddly unshaken.”¹³⁴ Ironically, after the collapse of the housing market, young people residing in non-rural regions began to see the socio-economic potential and cultural opportunities made available by living in rural America. The out-migration of rural Americans left large expanses of abandoned properties uncultivated and allowed non-rural residents to purchase land at cheaper prices.¹³⁵

2.2.3 Making Connections Between “The Farm” and Rural Landscapes

As has been suggested throughout this dissertation, for many people living in areas with low population densities the terms “rural” and “agricultural” are synonymous with each other.¹³⁶ Making connections between the rural environment and the farm is vital to my arguments because it fosters understanding between the historical meanings of agriculture in America and the wider contributions of its influences in contemporary society. As outlined earlier in

¹³³ Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas, *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means For America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2009), 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁵ I have made this argument in other writings such as a forthcoming article, titled “Pastiche the Pastoral: The Gentrification and Commodification of Rural America” in *Hipster Culture: A Reader* (in review with Routledge, 2019).

¹³⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1.

connection with Thomas Jefferson and the agrarians of the early Republic, living a self-sufficient lifestyle is still one of the most characteristic aspects of residing in rural America as a farmer. For farmers, self-sufficiency and acts of environmental sustainability are essential to belonging in the rural environment. Several scholars address various aspects about cultural overlaps occurring between agrarian/pastoral sentimentalists (such as those described earlier as family farmers and corporate farmers) and people who are migrating to these areas to practice a sustainable lifestyle by focusing on the changes in regional economy (i.e. Young Farmers). Additionally, other scholars argue how moving to rural areas situates the environment of the farm as a romanticized landscape, thereby creating a very distinctive topography representing the socio-economic class makeup of the people in rural locations. More specifically, some of the arguments surrounding rural class structures and pastoral sentimentalism which I find beneficial to this research are reflected in such works as: Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, Joe Bagaent's *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War*, Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas's *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*, Richard Wood's *Survival of Rural America: Small Victories and bitter Harvests*, Evelyn Funda's *Weeds: A Farm Daughters Lament*, and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*.

Generally, living apart from metropolitan areas means individuals have fewer opportunities for upward mobility due to systematic impacts of limitations on education, greater advantages given to people holding positions of power and privilege, and simply living in areas of lesser population density. However, many Americans (living in and outside these regions) perpetuate negative stereotypes of people living in rural locations by marginalizing people as "stigmatized for their inability to be productive, to own property, or to produce healthy and

upwardly mobile children – the sense of uplift on which the American dream is predicated” and referring to them as “white trash.”¹³⁷ Nancy Isenberg outlines the history of these people in her book, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. She explains, “In many ways, our class system has hinged on the evolving political rationales used to dismiss or demonize (or occasionally reclaim) those white rural outcasts seemingly incapable of becoming part of the mainstream society.”¹³⁸ Isenberg’s book not only shares the importance of America’s rural past but also embraces “the pervasiveness of a class hierarchy in the United States. It begins and ends with the concepts of land and property ownership: class identity and the material and metaphoric meaning of land are closely connected.”¹³⁹ The ideas pertaining to “white trash America” discussed in Isenberg’s book parallel my argument about the farmer paradigm shift occurring in agricultural communities across the United States. More specifically, land ownership (and access to land) has long been the distinguishing factor in the profitability of farming. Likewise, the ability to keep larger amounts of land in production allows farmers to increase their yield and gain more at market which thereby increases the possibility of their upward class mobility. However, as mentioned in other sections of this dissertation, most family farmers are still recognized as a marginalized group in the overall class stratification in America.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Nancy Isenberg *White Trash*, xv.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹⁴⁰ A larger theoretical discussion of class could result from reading key texts such as: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx *Das Kapital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), Frederick Engels *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), Emile Durkheim *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Max Weber *Economy and*

In his book *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*, Joe Bagaent argues that nearly one-third of individuals residing in rural America are “the unacknowledged working-class poor; conservative, politically misinformed or oblivious, and patriotic to their own detriment.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he states, “Many [rural Americans] are working poor but kid themselves that they are middle class – partly out of pride and partly because of the long-running national lie that most Americans are middle class.”¹⁴² Additionally, Bagaent claims:

[W]e are a working-class country. If we define “working class” simply as not having a college degree, then fully three-quarters of all Americans are working class. “Class,” however, is defined not in terms of income or degrees but in terms of power. Especially regarding labor. If you define “working class” in terms of power – bosses who have it and workers who don’t – at least 60 percent of America is working class, and the true middle class – the journalists, professionals, and semiprofessionals, people in the management class, etc. – are not more than one-third at best...Leaving aside all numbers, “working class” might best be defined like this: You do not have power over your work. You do not control when you work, how much you get paid, how fast you work.¹⁴³

This line of thinking is instrumental in developing the socio-economic structures of most agricultural systems in America. By this I mean, most farmers work based on the season, the weather, or around the schedule of the animals/crops they produce. The amount in which they are paid is controlled by the market for their products or the quantity and quality of merchandise

Society (1922), Frederic Jameson *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1992), and David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007).

¹⁴¹ Joe Bagaent, *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

produced. Their profitability and sustainability are dependent on consumers, as well as the reliability of their environment.¹⁴⁴

Since the most recent economic downturn in America, younger generations of people who grew up in the agricultural landscape have left rural America at a very increasing rate. Originally, some of these young people depended upon the family farm to sustain their role in rural life. Yet, with the shifting agriculture markets, rural America has witnessed a collapsing demand for labor.¹⁴⁵ In their sociological study of a small town in rural Iowa Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas argue:

What is happening in many small towns – the devastating loss of educated and talented young people, the aging of the population, and the erosion of the local economy – has repercussions far beyond the boundaries [of rural America]. Put simply, the health of small towns that are dotted across the Heartland matters because, without them, they country couldn't function, in the same way that a body cannot function without a heart.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Richard Wood claims in *Survival of Rural America: Small Victories and Bitter Harvests* that “small-town rural America [is] home to about one of every nine Americans, living on two-thirds of the land.”¹⁴⁷ Yet, what is most beneficial to my argument when contextualizing these scholars' claims is their interest in rural places given their proximity to urban centers.

¹⁴⁴ Similar works pertaining to the working class in rural America include: Sarah Smarsh's book *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* (2018), J.D. Vance's book *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (2016), David Brown and Kai Schafft's *Rural People and Communities in the 21st Century* (2011), Elizabeth Ransom's *Rural America in a Globalizing World: Problems and Prospects for the 2010s* (2014), Jennifer Sherman's *Those Who Work, Those Who Don't: Poverty, Morality, and Family in Rural America* (2009), David Shipler's *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (2005), Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2013), and Joan Williams' *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America* (2017).

¹⁴⁵ Carr and Kefalas, *Hollowing Out the Middle*, 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Wood, *Survival of Rural America*, xi.

By his definition, Wood sticks strictly to the definition of “rural” outlined by the U.S. Census Bureau (refer to Chapter One) and insinuates that there is a major difference between small towns existing on the outskirts of an urban center and one which is truly rural, 100 or more miles from an area that is majorly populated. He states, “Small towns near metropolitan areas have a bright future economically, and their population growth and property values show it. From the point of view of demographics and growth, the issues facing such communities could not be more different from the issues facing [truly] rural farm towns.”¹⁴⁸ Along with the history and value of rural America, Wood’s book explores what appeals many urban dwellers to be interested in these places. To better explain, he quotes historian David Danbom, ““Whatever the reality of rural America, the idea of rural America will always be popular with major segments of our population because, in the last analysis, it is America’s field of dreams.””¹⁴⁹ Consequently, while the downfall of small-town America is supplemental to my argument for various reasons, it is not the focus of my research. However, studying it enables me to argue how privileged young people gain the ability and knowledge to relocate from areas of greater urbanization and adopt the knowledge required to participate in rural culture.

Evelyn Funda’s book, *Weeds: A Farm Daughter’s Lament* is a memoir/personal history of her family’s farm in Idaho and the sequential sale of the property when her parents became too elderly to maintain it. Overall, her book argues that her family’s farm was situated in a small, tight-knit, rural community which added to the idealized nature of the property and to her family’s wholesome lifestyle. About the harmony between multi-regional and multi-generational perspectives of farming, Funda writes:

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., xvii.

Farming is portrayed as a form of spiritual fulfillment, an act of artistry and divine creation, an expression of national commitment and patriotism, a means for proving heroism or manhood, a process of gaining personal empowerment, a foundation for community unity, a guarantee of personal independence and self-sufficiency, a chance to arrive at an authentic and wholesome life, a method for gaining dominion over and improving an imperfect landscape, a partnership with natural forces, and a battles against those same natural forces...Farming is not just a job – it's a calling, and the farmer is ubiquitous in our lives.¹⁵⁰

However, Funda knows first-hand what is at stake when ties to the land and to farming community are broken. Furthermore, she argues that without the continuity of the farmer as a profession we would undo something at the heart of our identity as a nation, thereby also losing a fragment of our humanity.¹⁵¹ Likewise, she contends that due to the shifting economy and aging citizens of the farm industry, rural areas are becoming hard pressed to succeed.¹⁵² The loss of rural spaces and places proves difficult for remaining connected with the natural environment and the agrarian lifestyle generally associated with many American's heritage.

Escaping to nature and romanticizing the rural/agricultural landscape has been used as a literary theme for quite some time. Although the main arguments of *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* are geared more towards how the industrialized machine is used as an identifier of power and wealth progress, Leo Marx proclaims, "The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination."¹⁵³ In other words, he insinuates that

¹⁵⁰ Evelyn Funda, *Weeds: A Farm Daughter's Lament* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), xi.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

we as Americans have an innate desire to return to these landscapes and hold them in high regard because of their sentimental qualities. Furthermore, people who live in non-rural environments create manifestations of longing for a natural environment other than the urban life that they have grown up in. Marx suggests that this is because of the nostalgia that hangs over non-urban landscapes. In short, people desire to participate in settings that are greener than their current urban settings. In search of the pursuit of happiness, they also want to escape hard social and technological realities of metropolitan landscapes. Marx defines these landscapes as “a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural” and that moving to these locations is “understood as movement away from an ‘artificial’ world...from the city toward the country.”¹⁵⁴ Most importantly in this passage is his use of the word “cultivated” to make the connection between the pastoral and the rural, implying that some type of land work (i.e. agriculture/farming) is accomplished in the natural environment of the countryside. More explicitly, Marx situates the “pastoral ideal” as revolving around “simple, rural environments” and living in harmony with nature.

As stated earlier, many family farmers in rural America have been uprooted for reasons related to the region’s failing economy, the growth of urbanization, and the increase in large, corporate farms.¹⁵⁵ Yet, they often feel the most at home in areas that are less populated. In *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, bell hooks writes about the dichotomy between living in rural Kentucky and the more urban environments where she has resided. She writes, “Returning to the Kentucky landscape of my childhood and most importantly the hills, I am able to reclaim a

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁵⁵ “The Disappearing Family Farm,” *The Real Truth* date accessed 11 July 2018, <https://rcg.org/realtruth/articles/100607-006-family.html>.

sublime understanding that living in harmony with the earth renews the spirit. Coming home to live in Kentucky was for me a journey back to a place where I felt I belonged.”¹⁵⁶ For hooks, returning to her home place in Kentucky evokes emotions of nostalgia and belonging, while finding solace in nature and living sustainably. Most importantly, hooks uses personal anecdotes to tie the politics of race, gender, and class with issues surrounding environmentalism and sustainability to examine how issues of land tenureship effected marginalized groups of displaced agrarians in the rural South.

Similarly, Gene Logsdon’s book *The Contrary Farmer* is a personal account of his unorthodox farming style in Upper Sandusky, Ohio. Through various storytelling experiences, he explains how he moved back to the farm (an environment he grew up in during his childhood) and began a non-conformist, sustainable lifestyle practice. About himself and other individuals like him, Logsdon writes, “I think of us as the Ramparts People. In all ages we have camped on the edges of the earth, the buffer between our more conventional and timid brethren and those nether regions where, as the medieval maps instructed, ‘there be dragons and wild ‘beestes’.”¹⁵⁷ Both bell hooks and Gene Logsdon suggest that living in a rural/farming environment classifies them as marginalized citizens in comparison with people who have always lived in these environments. However, they also suggest that living in rural regions allows them to have closer associations with their neighbors/family members and hold deeper connection to the land which they inhabit unlike those accustomed to people who live in areas of greater urbanization.

¹⁵⁶ bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2009), 65.

¹⁵⁷ Gene Logsdon, *The Contrary Farmer* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1994), xv.

Possibly the most influential voice to suggest the profitability for continuing time-honored methods of agriculture and promote the traditional practices of family farming is Wendell Berry. In *The Unsettling of America*, he argues that the economics of farming is the primary rationale for the decline of the family farm in rural America. He writes:

A healthy *farm* culture can be based only upon familiarity and can grow only among a people soundly established upon the land; it nourishes and safeguards a human intelligence of the earth that no amount of technology can satisfactorily replace. We now have only the sad remnants of those communities. If we allow another generation to pass without doing what is necessary to enhance and embolden the possibility now perishing with them, we will lose it altogether.¹⁵⁸

Subsequently, he explains that the capitalistic goals of corporate farmers have taken precedence over their smaller-sized counterparts. Therefore, the success of farming is no longer measured by the skill of the owner of the property, but instead controlled by bureaucratic institutions of agriculture and the amount of property farmed. Consequently, not only does Berry describe how commercial farming took over, but also how the “pastoral ideal” surrounding the family operated versions of “the farm” goes by the wayside. In short, farmers tend to make more money by having larger operations. To keep that economic propulsion going, they need to keep getting larger. However, this increase in farm size has forced many people off their long-established family farms and out of their rural communities because they cannot afford to maintain them any longer, thereby leaving large quantities of property available for purchase. As I mentioned earlier, this decrease in family operated farms has allowed a younger generation of people with the financial means, work ethic, and wistful desire to migrate from areas of greater urbanization to rural, farming communities.

¹⁵⁸ Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 47.

For many people who reside in rural communities across the United States, agriculture is an intrinsic way of life. As David Brown and Louis Swanson note, they “merit special attention because...the American public tends to see [this] population as a repository of almost sacred values and a stable anchor during times of rapid social change.”¹⁵⁹ Historically, people living in these farming communities have shared ideologies on familial structures and pastoral sentimentalism which have marked their ways of life distinctive in comparison to non-rural groups. Additionally, they “draw on a common pioneering heritage, strong intergenerational bonds, and a stable, cohesive community to construct a way of life that valued family self-reliance. The rural community was a place where residents knew one another, shared values and history, and felt a sense of trust. They also were integrated by effective social norms.”¹⁶⁰ However, while contemporary citizens participating in American agriculture no longer require these quaint characteristics which portray rural farmers, many of them strive to emulate these traits in their current ways of life. Usually, as I will demonstrate in this dissertation, these Young Farmers practice methods of belonging by appropriating agricultural skills practiced in rural America, as well as desire nostalgic experiences in order to perform authentically as farmers. In the chapters that follow, I share the stories of several Young Farmers who distribute their products to consumers at three farmers markets in Michigan. These farmers share commonalities with the family farmers residing in rural America because they are concerned with providing a meaningful existence for themselves and their families, pursuing small-scale agriculture in order to promote sustainability (both in the agricultural industry and in terms of the environment more

¹⁵⁹ David Brown and Louis Swanson, “Introduction,” 1-2.

¹⁶⁰ Katherine MacTavish and Sonya Salamon, “What do Rural Families Look Like Today?”, 74.

generally), and developing strong community bonds with other producers and consumers. Yet, they also are highly invested in the wide array of entrepreneurial aspects the land has to offer and creating a diverse variety of marketable products helps them drive up their profit margins. It is with these principles in mind that I began thinking about this project.

CHAPTER 3. MIDDLE OF THE MITT: MIDLAND AREA FARMERS MARKET

Several of the streets are blocked off with orange traffic cones and barrels to direct traffic around the construction occurring in downtown Midland, Michigan. For many years now, there has been big plans in the works for a complete downtown overhaul. This redevelopment will implement a more modern streetscape and create more business and entertainment opportunities for the local community. Passing by the county courthouse, a large, yellow crane is positioned on the corner of Ashman and Main Streets to lift steel beams into place for the remodeling occurring at the building located there. Turning right at the stoplight and heading down the steep hill towards Chippewassee Park, The Tridge peaks out from behind an abundance of green foliage.

Built in the early 1980s, this three-way bridge allows easy access to all the riverbanks at the fork where the Chippewa and Tittabawwassee Rivers meet. At the base of the hill and the foot of The Tridge, a circular drive winds around a round-shaped pavilion where a mass of people is meandering on this sunny, Wednesday afternoon. The small parking lot is full and parallel parking off Ann Street is required. Two women walk by, chatting and pushing toddler strollers. The children smile and squeal with delight as the playground comes into their view. A large group of people wearing athletic clothing position themselves on the grass as they lay out their yoga mats. Approaching on the sidewalk lined with brightly colored marigolds, the smell of fresh popcorn mixed with street foods fills the air. Food truck vendors are parked on the outskirts of the park and diners line up for hamburgers, kebabs, and crepes. Some of them are wearing casual business attire, which could hint towards their employment at the nearby chemical corporation or one of the office buildings downtown. They locate available picnic tables near the

river to enjoy their lunch. Some make a speedy retreat presumably back to work; yet, others linger to roam the farmers market.

Even in this setting, the construction occurring at the top of the hill creates a veiled threat to the park's tranquil landscape. Replacing old structures with new opportunities seems to be a common theme taking root in many aspects of the Midland community. Recently, there has been discussion about altering the farmers market space and transferring it to a different site. Within the community, there has been greater demand for alternative markets for fresh, local food and the current farmers market location has reached its full potential. Throughout this chapter, I will elaborate on the social, cultural, environmental, and economic shifts occurring in the region by focusing on the visible binaries among agricultural producers at the Midland Area Farmers Market. More specifically, I highlight two Young Farmer operations – Good Stead Farm and Smitten Mitten Farm – who distribute their produce there. Contrasting the long-standing family and corporate farmers who are well established in the region, these Young Farmers depict a new agricultural model which appeals to many of the young, business-savvy, healthy-minded, financially-stable consumers migrating to the area. Additionally, they represent an additional and alternative food source for marginalized community members experiencing economic hardship. By illustrating these examples, I argue that Midland's Young Farmers are utilizing their farmers market to broaden their perspective of both their local agricultural network and the people who make up their consumer base.

3.1 Midland Area Farmers Market: Grow Locally, Think Globally

Centrally located in the heart of Michigan's rural farmland, the Midland Area Farmers Market (MAFM) has been a community gathering place for local farmers, small business

vendors, and consumers since it was established over sixty years ago.¹⁶¹ Controlled by the Midland Business Alliance, Emily Lyons supervises the MAFM procedures as the Market Manager and Stephanie Kolodziejski oversees its daily operations (i.e. vendor space assignments, market setup, data collection and information distribution, sponsored educational and entertainment activities, etc.) as the Farmers Market Master.¹⁶² Other community sponsors such as the Chippewa Nature Center, the Greater Midland Community Center, and Little Forks Conservancy provide family-friendly events and workshops (i.e. a children's bounce house, tennis lessons, classes about area wildlife, etc.) to offer more opportunities and reasons for people to come to the MAFM location.¹⁶³ Emily Lyons suggests the contributions of these organizations enhances the small-town atmosphere of the MAFM by creating familiarity among farmers, consumers, businesses, and local organizations. Yet, she also argues the city of Midland has several other cultural aspects drawing people to the city. Lyons states:

Even though we don't think we have a lot of interesting things to bring tourism in [to Midland], we do with the Center for the Arts, with Dow Gardens, [and even] the Tridge is an interesting structure that will bring people [here] sometimes...I think we actually see some diversity because [to some] people this is considered "Up North"...so, the proximity to both Bay City and I-75, as well as [local lakes] where people will come here for a day off from the lake...[also, the] large corporations we have in town [cause] a little

¹⁶¹ Emily Lyons, interview by author, July 28, 2017.

¹⁶² The Midland Business Alliance is an affiliation between the Midland Chamber of Commerce and Midland Tomorrow, an economic development organization for Midland County. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of corporate CEOs and employees from local businesses. Due to progressive visions about community growth, the structure of this institution has changed since my initial interview with Emily Lyons. At that time, the MAFM was only managed by the Midland Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁶³ Harsha Nahata, "Midland Area Farmers Market Brings Community Together," *Catalyst*, last modified November 2, 2017, <http://www.secondwavemedia.com/midland/features/midland-area-farmers-market-110117.aspx>.

interesting ethnic diversity. We [also] have a university [which] brings diversity with a fair amount of international students.”¹⁶⁴

Given all of these positive cultural contributions though, I argue the MAFM provides a space for an increased visibility of unspoken, longstanding forms of socio-economic marginalization in the greater Midland community to become more apparent, especially pertaining to local farmers and consumers. More specifically, I will suggest throughout this chapter that the area’s large corporations have influenced the types of consumers who purchase goods at the farmers market and increase awareness of the globalized changes occurring in the small-town atmosphere. Likewise, these industries represent affluence and revitalization in an area which has generally been known for its relaxed, aging community. With these concepts in mind, the MAFM is similar to other farmers markets in the state. Moreover, Young Farmers use it as a space to interact with other farmers in the region (especially family farmers who have been coming to the market for several generations), as well as getting to know the consumers of their products.

Comprised of one permanent pavilion structure with a round, covered walkway, the MAFM is situated at the end of Ashman Street in downtown Midland, Michigan near the base of the Tridge and on the northeast bank of the Tittabawassee River. The location near the river is significant to the socio-cultural dynamic of the farmers market because it is a huge draw for recreational activities in the community, with several parks and playgrounds, numerous bike trails, a skate park, canoe and kayak rentals, and the downtown business district also existing near the same place. Yet, this site also results in the farmers market structure being vulnerable to flooding due to its proximity to the water (see Figure 3.1-3.3).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Emily Lyons interview.

¹⁶⁵ This is necessary to include here because it impacts farmers in the region when the MAFM needs to close because it is literally underwater. During the most recent flood in the



Figure 3.1 The Midland Area Farmers Market is located a park near downtown Midland, Michigan on the bank of the Tittabawassee River and at the foot of the Tridge. This location is beneficial to the market because it's a huge recreational draw for community members with access to several hiking and bike trails, a skate park, and kayak and canoe rentals. Image produced and used with permission by Google.



Figure 3.2 The pavilion for the Midland Area Farmers Market is a round structure constructed of red brick and a cement sidewalk path underneath a covered roof, Winter 2018. On farmers market days, farmers and vendors fill the inner and outer rings of the circle to sell their goods to local consumers. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.

Spring 2017 season, the market was forced to shut down because water levels reached clear to the roof of the farmers market structure. However, some farmers who usually attend the MAFM relocated to an alternate site at Good Stead Farm in Hope, Michigan to distribute their produce according to an interview with Sarah Longstreth, July 21, 2017.



Figure 3.3 In the early spring 2017, the Tittabawassee River waters rise to flood stage which causes the pavilion where the Midland Area Farmers Market is located to be submerged under water. Usually, this results in the farmers market being cancelled until the waters recede. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.

Every Wednesday and Saturday morning from early May through late October, farmers, vendors, and consumers arrive from the Midland area and its surrounding counties to purchase goods with a primary focus on local agribusiness and consumable production.¹⁶⁶ More specifically, MAFM allows for:

...the sale of Michigan and U.S. grown high-quality fresh fruits, vegetables, related food items, allowable Cottage Food items, baked goods, animal proteins, plants, and flowers. Soaps, body care products, and candles must be handcrafted by using seasonal ingredients from the producer-vendor's farm or another local farm. Any herbs, milk,

¹⁶⁶ Additionally, the Midland Area Farmers Market is open on Saturdays through mid-November. Also, it should be noted here that the hours of operation for the farmers market have shifted in the last few years. Originally, the market was opened on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Yet, Wednesday hours were altered to an afternoon shift – the thought process being these hours could better benefit the local downtown Midland commercial district and the influx of local food trucks. However, there was push back from the farmers and vendors who were distributing their goods at the market. Most especially, many of them claimed their produce was not retaining its freshness, as it did during the morning shift and their profit margins were decreasing. Therefore, the Wednesday hours have since transferred back to the original morning time to assist in reducing negative impact.

honey, or other natural products included in the products should be grown by the producer-vendor or purchased directly from a product grown in the local area (milk, honey, etc., no soy or other product of unknown origin).¹⁶⁷

Originally, the MAFM was constructed as a site where local farmers were able to offload abundances of crops to other community members. However, over time, it has grown to be a centralized point for the local food and artisan scene which encapsulates food trucks, novelty food items not grown in an agricultural setting, and some small, handicraft objects. Though, consumers usually come to the MAFM to purchase local and specialty goods directly from farmers and vendors who produce them, rather than obtaining similar items from other supermarket locations in the area. In short, people go to the Midland Area Farmers Market to get food which has had the most direct route from farm to table.

On peak market days, approximately 5,000 people and nearly 100 vendors come to the market. Stall rental is only \$25 per day for each vendor, which offers an inexpensive way for local farmers and business people to participate in local commerce while earning an income (see Figure 3.4-3.7).¹⁶⁸ According to Lyons, MAFM consumers are educated about local food, care about their local farmers, and they've continued coming to the market because of its longevity and affordable prices.¹⁶⁹ Based on several demographics of local consumers, the MAFM implements important governmental programs to assist specific vendors in selling their goods and give consumers the ability to purchase fresh, local food at more reasonable prices. More specifically, it accepts several forms of "alternative currencies" such as EBT/SNAP benefit

¹⁶⁷ "2019 Midland Area Farmers Market: Rules & Regulations," *Midland Business Alliance*, last modified 2019, <http://www.mbami.org/midland-area-farmers-market/>.

¹⁶⁸ Harsha Nahata, "Midland Area Farmers Market Brings Community Together."

¹⁶⁹ Emily Lyons interview.



Figure 3.5 An early summer rain falls and keeps shoppers away from purchasing items for sale at the Midland Area Farmers Market in downtown Midland, Michigan, summer 2018. However, farmers and vendors still fill the market with fresh produce, baked goods, and artisan handicrafts. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.



Figure 3.6 Shoppers fill the Midland Area Farmers Market on Wednesday and Saturdays from early April until late October to purchase goods from local farmers and vendors, summer 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.



Figure 3.7 Food trucks and tents line the sidewalk near the Midland Area Farmers Market in downtown Midland, Michigan, summer 2018. The food trucks began to be a regular occurrence as the farmers market grew in popularity in the early 2010s. Now, they are a major draw to downtown consumers who visit the market. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.

cards, Double Up Food Bucks, Project Fresh, and Senior Project Fresh. Each of these programs benefits different marginalized groups of people in the community.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, the Midland County Emergency Food Pantry accepts fresh food donations from farmers market vendors who have leftover food items at the end of scheduled market days in the months of June through October to further benefit members in need within the community.¹⁷¹

The MAFM is a space which gives greater consciousness to economic disparity in mid-Michigan and is an “important element to the growth and sustainability of a vibrant downtown

¹⁷⁰ All of which I will elaborate on further in Chapter 4.

¹⁷¹ “2019 Midland Area Farmers Market: Rules & Regulations.”

Midland.”¹⁷² I argue this also could be from the overall growth in popularity of farmers markets in the United States and the ways in which Young Farmers perform agricultural authenticity to promote the nostalgic emotions involving the farm and the goods they produce at these markets. With these ideologies in mind, the MAFM has received so much additional interest by local farmers and vendors that it has outgrown its original site. In recent years, there has been a large amount of discussion about transferring the market to another location to best occupy the surplus in Young Farmers, food trucks, and handicraft artisans. Some Midland community members see this adjustment as a positive opportunity for downtown development, as well as for farmers producing local food. One resident states:

Millennials, I mean really just people across the board, are looking for food and for goods that are made here, made in the community, made by people they know – their neighbors and local community members – and they want to support that. And expanding the farmers market gives people more room to bring those goods that they’ve made or that they’ve grown in front of the rest of the community. We don’t need it to be Chicago, but we need it to continue thriving with our young professionals that plan on having, raising families, and just to make Midland a better place.¹⁷³

However, the plan has not been implemented yet, due to funding reasons.¹⁷⁴ Also, I would argue that discussion about transitioning the MAFM from one location to another may be due to the overall demographic shift of farmers and consumers in the region. Put differently, in a city where

¹⁷² Heather Jordan, “Should the Midland Farmers Market Mov? Downtown Group Says Yes,” *MLive.com*, last modified September 10, 2015, https://www.mlive.com/news/Saginaw/index.ssf/2015/09/momentum_midlands_seeks_farmer.html.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ According to their website, Momentum Midland is “a group of citizens, businesses, and foundations collaborating with the community to implement viable recommendations to enhance Midland and more specifically downtown to attract investment, enable economic development, and create jobs. The aim is to present an exciting vision for Midland, one that creates stronger economic development, new opportunities to grow and ultimately better quality of life for residents.” For more information about the Momentum Midland plan, please see their website: <http://www.momentum-midland.org/>.

residents pride themselves on pushing the advancement of innovative technology, it seems that its aging occupants revel in the traditions of the region's agricultural industry and are uninterested in changing the venue.

3.2 Midland Area Farmers Market Young Farmers

Appropriately named, Midland, Michigan is geographically located in the center of the Lower Peninsula near the crook of the thumb in the Great Lakes Bay region (see Figure 3.8). In the late 1820s, it was used as a trading post for the American Fur Company which purchased animal pelts from Native American fur trappers and officially established as a city in 1887.¹⁷⁵ After the fur industry declined and given its proximity to both the Saginaw Bay and after the construction of the Pere Marquette Railroad, families migrated to the area to become farmers and loggers. Historically, the Great Lakes Bay region has been a prosperous place for the agricultural industry due to several geographical factors including the Saginaw Bay, which acts as a drainage basin for several area rivers. Additionally, the climatic zone for plant hardiness and the unique characterization of the region's soil (a mix of dry sands to wet clays, as well as low-level lands to hilly uplands) aid in the variety of crops which are prosperous in the region.¹⁷⁶

Essentially, the classification of Midland's soil is one of the key reasons it developed into a more lucrative city. In 1897, Herbert Henry Dow founded The Dow Chemical Company after

¹⁷⁵ *Herbert H. Dow Historical Museum*, Midland County Historical Society, Midland, Michigan.

¹⁷⁶ For a climatic zone map see Figure 4.5. Additional extensive information regarding the environmental structure of Midland County has been conveyed in various governmental reports, such as: the USDA's "Midland County Soil Survey" (1979) and U.S. Census Bureau documents pertaining to specific Michigan counties.

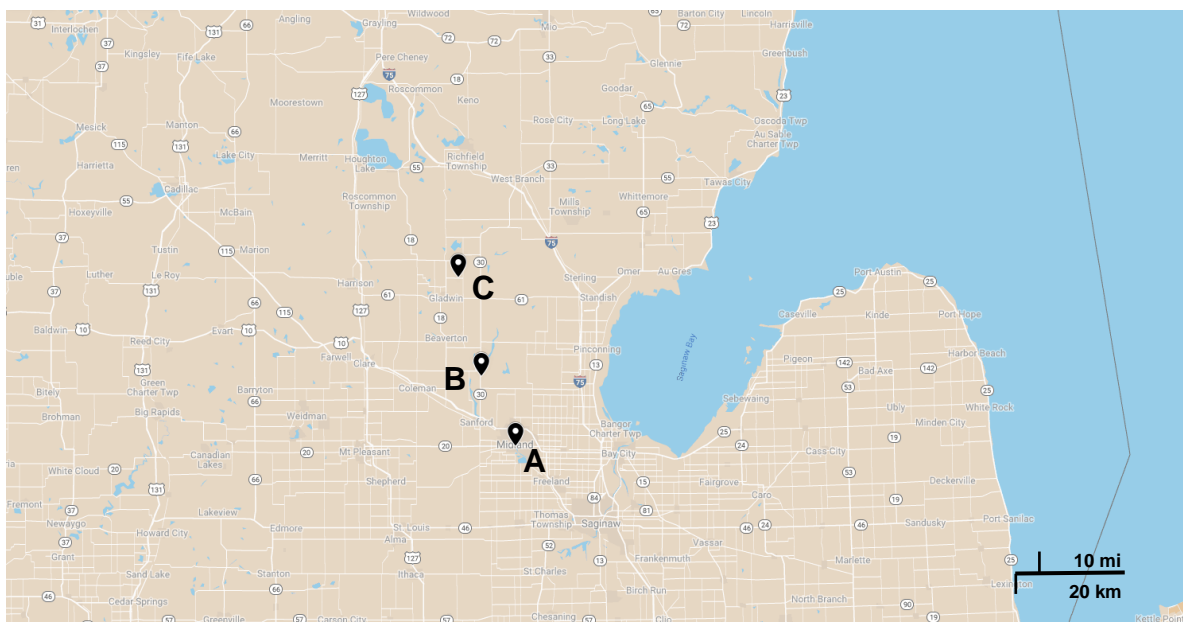


Figure 3.8 A bird's eye view map of the Great Lakes Bay region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Landmark locations are as follows: (A) Midland Area Farmers Market, (B) Good Stead Farm, and (C) Smitten Mitten Farm. Map produced by author.

he innovated extraction processes for the bromine deposits located under the city.¹⁷⁷ Over the next twenty-five years and in comparison to their competitors, The Dow Chemical Company rapidly diversified their product lines and became a major producer of agricultural chemicals, chlorine, phenol and other dyes, and magnesium metals both nationally and globally.¹⁷⁸ Now, Midland promotes itself as the “City of Modern Explorers” and the headquarters of The Dow Chemical Company still calls it home, which provides jobs and economic stability for some people residing in the region. Furthermore, it has become a center of industrial innovation, with

¹⁷⁷ Don Whitehead, *The Dow Story: The History of the Dow Chemical Company*, (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

the addition of solar energy and other emerging technologies connected to the city.¹⁷⁹ However, agriculture still plays a significant role in the development of the area and Midland County farmers.

According to the most recent U.S. Census, the average age of people participating in Midland County agriculture is fifty-eight years old – directly in line with that of the typical American farmer. The average size farm is approximately one-hundred sixty acres with soybeans, corn, wheat, and sugar beets producing the largest crop yields. Usually, farmers in Midland County identify as white males and about fifty percent of them work in secondary occupations away from the farm to supplement their annual earnings.¹⁸⁰ However, as addressed throughout this dissertation, the agricultural scene in Midland County is changing with the introduction of several Young Farmers into the landscape.

3.2.1 *Good Stead Farm*

Originally from Midland, Michigan, when Sarah Longstreth (see Figure 3.9) left her hometown after high school it was to pursue an undergraduate degree in Anthropology from a small, liberal arts school in Illinois. Initially, she endeavored to receive a doctoral degree, specializing in Middle East studies. However, while away at college, she tended plants working at a biological research station operated by the school and her interests shifted. After graduating, she relocated to Maine and became involved with an organic farming community, where she

¹⁷⁹ Tom Henderson, “The Only U.S. Polysilicon Supplier is Reeling,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20180408/news/657146/the-only-us-polysilicon-supplier-is-still-reeling>.

¹⁸⁰ “Quick Facts: Midland County, Michigan,” *census.gov*, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/midlandcountymichigan>.



Figure 3.9 Sarah Longstreth stands in the sheep pasture at Good Stead Farm located in Hope, Michigan approximately sixteen miles northwest of the Midland Area Farmers Market, fall 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.

began apprenticing on several area farms. Frequently, she relocated to “different farms, different productions, different places” to gain as much experience as possible, with as many different farms and farmers.¹⁸¹ Her travels took her to both national and global locations, including Minnesota, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, where she participated and learned other agricultural methods which had been developed overtime to accommodate the different climates and cultural practices of those places. Eventually, Longstreth decided that she was at a point in her life where she no longer wanted to manage other people’s farms. So, she started looking for land and moved back to the Midland area in the fall of 2013.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Sarah Longstreth, interview by author, July 21, 2017.

¹⁸² Sarah Longstreth interview.

Appropriately named, Good Stead Farm (see Figure 3.10) is located just two miles from Sarah Longstreth's childhood home, in the rural, unincorporated community of Hope Township, Michigan, approximately sixteen miles northwest of Midland, Michigan. She has claimed, "when I think of a homestead, I think of a grounded place, a place of home, a place of comfort...I want people to consider this [farm] their food home."¹⁸³ Keeping this in mind, Longstreth knows that her farm is different from others in the area for multiple reasons. More specifically, unlike larger family farms or corporate farms in the region, Good Stead Farm's property is twenty-two acres of semi-wooded land, of which only eight acres is actively managed as pasture with one acre dedicated solely for vegetable production purposes. There is both a greenhouse and a high tunnel in operation on the property.¹⁸⁴ Longstreth incorporates a variety of diverse, global forms of agricultural methods into her farming practices, such as European and Asian styles which focus on soil preparation prior to cultivation and managing space efficiently to enable multiple plantings on a smaller piece of land. Before the farm was leased to Longstreth, it had been left

¹⁸³ Cindy Crain Newman, "What's New at the Midland Farmers Market?." *Midland Daily News* May 11, 2015, <https://www.ourmidland.com/news/article/What-s-new-at-the-Midland-Farmers-Market-6910116.php/>

¹⁸⁴ According to a feature on the USDA website, "hoop houses, or seasonal high tunnels, are plastic-covered structures that trap heat from the sun to create a warm climate. High tunnels help farmers extend the growing season – producing crops longer into the winter and earlier in the spring. This not only improves a farmer's bottom line, it also enables them to provide fresh, local produce for their communities, often year-round. High tunnels commonly incorporate other conservation practices, such as drip irrigation and cover crops, and protect plants from air pollution and pesticide drift." Savannah Halleaux, "#fridaysonthefarm" Michigan Organic Farm Stands in 'Good Stead'," USDA, last modified 2018, <http://usdaonline.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f0312b74186f44b6b8e2e2ee8ce204bc>.



Figure 3.10 An early fall 2016 morning at Good Stead Farm in Hope, Michigan. Photos like this one are a common occurrence on Sarah Longstreth's social media accounts, probably due to the majestic beauty that so many people think these types of images depict. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.

dormant and unplanted for three to five years making it capable for it to gain certified organic status – the first farm of its kind in Midland County.¹⁸⁵

According to Longstreth, Good Stead Farm keeps approximately one hundred seventy laying hens, about twenty laying ducks, a small flock of 100% grass fed sheep for meat, wool,

¹⁸⁵ As a certified organic producer, Good Stead Farm follows National Organic Program (NOP) guidelines for planting, harvesting, and farm management. The paperwork process for organic certification can be long, arduous, time consuming, and sometimes confusing. In order to ensure all documents are completed correctly and on schedule, farmers are required to operate certification business through a third-party organization which acts as a go between with the farm and the federal government. However, there is not a certification organization in the state of Michigan. Therefore, most of the people Longstreth deals with about Good Stead Farm are located in Wisconsin. The first step in the process is the longest and hardest because it requires records of the last three years of land use, including soil testing, water testing, and recording the history of the land. Additionally, there are numerous fees. Sarah Longstreth interview.

and fiber production, as well as forty-five different vegetables, in over one-hundred fifty different varieties. These include: summer and winter squashes, both cherry and heirloom tomatoes, arugula, microgreens, kohlrabi, cabbage, eggplant, zucchini, and a fair amount of specialty products requested by local consumers (see Figure 3.11).¹⁸⁶ Longstreth is committed to growing this food without any “synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or fungicides – even those approved for organic production.”¹⁸⁷ Additionally, she “strive[s] to grow food that excites people to eat well, to eat vegetables, to cook and to share with others.”¹⁸⁸ Along with the MAFM, Good Stead Farm also distributes their products occasionally at the St. Louis Farmers Market in St. Louis, Michigan, and the Lansing Area Farmers Market outside the Michigan State Capitol building in Lansing, Michigan, to three different local restaurants, and through summer, fall, and winter CSA shares to fifty families.

Longstreth works hard at providing the highest quality products for her community and her customers (see Figure 3.12-3.15). Yet, she sometimes feels misrepresented because of confusion surrounding the various definitions of organic agriculture. She realizes that her higher quality products are sold at a premium cost (Good Stead Farm sells eggs for \$6/dozen), which presents a challenge because not everyone in the community can understand or afford the price differences between her products and those available in other types of markets. Therefore, she spends some of her time strategizing ways of being more transparent within her community. She teaches people about the quality of the local food she produces, its longer shelf-life in

¹⁸⁶ Sarah Longstreth interview.

¹⁸⁷ “Good Stead Farm,” *Michigan Organic Food & Farm Alliance*, last modified 2018, <http://farmguide.moffa.net/farmpages/0165.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Newman, “What’s New At the Midland Farmers Market?”



Figure 3.11 A sampling of produce grown on Good Stead Farm, fall 2018. Sarah Longstreth usually submits colorful images like this one weekly to the CSA members so they know what produce they will be acquiring in their weekly share box. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 3.12 The images above are representative of some of the special care given to the produce grown on Good Stead Farm. More specifically, the photograph on the left depicts a special piece of equipment used to wash root vegetables before being distributed to consumers. On the right, biodegradable cardboard egg cartons individually stamped with the Good Stead Farm logo are represented. Photographs reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 3.13 Seedlings grow in the greenhouse located on Good Stead Farm, spring 2017. Beginning in early spring, farm workers plant these seedlings and then transplant them to the outside gardens throughout the season. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 3.14 Several farm workers harvest onions by hand at Good Stead Farm, late summer 2018. The farm believes in sustainable growing practices and prefers to harvest crops in this method to ensure the best quality produce for their consumers. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 3.15 Farm workers string twine for tomatoes to climb in one of the high tunnels located on Good Stead Farm, summer 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.

comparison to products available at area supermarkets (which usually transport items from greater distances), and how some consumers have come to rely on her farm for these reasons. Moreover, she states that Good Stead Farm's CSA membership has a great retention rate and sells out every year, probably because of their interest in these details.¹⁸⁹

Longstreth believes there are many benefits to participating in the Midland Area Farmers Market; yet, she admits that the setup and transportation of vegetables is a lot of hard work without any guarantee of substantial income (see Figure 3.16-3.17). She states that attending these weekly events is a lot of time working away from the farm, in which her products are sitting out and losing quality of freshness. However, the value of distributing her farm's produce at the farmers market trumps those hardships. Furthermore, Longstreth trusts that other than bringing her vegetables to the farmers market merely for customers to purchase, she gains the ability to provide her community with an experience in an area which does not have many opportunities for young people. More specifically, she states:

I think it's challenging to be a person in a rural community in the Midwest. If you went to Vermont and you went to a rural community I mean, rural communities are being brought back by young people and there are vibrant communities of young people in the world and this is not that kind of community...it's a challenge...it doesn't necessarily feel sustainable as like a young person doing what I'm doing. It feels kind of like an uphill battle.¹⁹⁰

To overcome this feeling of disconnect, Longstreth offers an apprentice program on Good Stead Farm to host other young people who have similar viewpoints to her own. However, she admits the farming lifestyle and the Midland community may not be ideal for everyone. About the apprentices that she invites to Good Stead Farm, she states:

¹⁸⁹ Sarah Longstreth interview.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.



Figure 3.16 Sarah Longstreth and one of the Good Stead Farm workers pack boxes of produce before attending the Midland Area Farmers Market, spring 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.



Figure 3.17 Sarah Longstreth works at the Good Stead Farm booth at the Midland Area Farmers Market, summer 2016. Usually, she is one of the first faces seen on Wednesday and Saturday mornings at the market because of the placement of her stall. Photograph reproduced with permission by Sarah Longstreth.

You know, it's like eighty to ninety-hour weeks and most of them are hard. I think first and foremost, we do this with apprentices or potential applicants, where it sounds so great, so romantic, and then, they come here and they're like, 'That is so much work. No, thank you.' Then, you see that even in where there's [an] established, small farming community, [they're] doing this kind of stuff. So, I think there are very few people who do want to do this amount of work and with the challenges that I have, I think even less so in an area like this there's just not enough to offer. There's not restaurants to go to, there's not coffee shops or community gathering places...there's not a lot of [outside] culture to sort of invigorate the area. There's a lot of older people, [not many with] progressive ideas...I'm not talking about the far left, I'm talking about more moderate open-minded, young people.¹⁹¹

I would argue that these sentiments are directly related to her being nostalgic about the Young Farmers (and locations of farms) which she has worked with before, especially due to her belief that she is the only farmer of her kind in the Midland area. However, she distinguishes that she's too busy performing current agricultural tasks to establish too much of an emotional connection and waste too much time sentimentalizing her past farming endeavors.

More likely, Longstreth feels agricultural community connections by performing other self-sufficiency measures, such as homesteading, producing food, and having the skills and knowledge to keep going "after the grocery store has closed."¹⁹² With those principles in mind, she mentions that she does a lot of personal canning, freezing, and pickling. Longstreth states:

The only vegetables I really eat in the winter are my own vegetables. I don't buy tomatoes off season. I would never buy a watermelon in the winter...I believe very much in eating responsibly because there is a very large cost to food production and transportation...Besides, I don't like what tomatoes taste like in the grocery store. I don't like what does into them and getting them to me.¹⁹³

More importantly, Longstreth believes that by participating in these time-honored tasks of self-sufficiency and performing sustainable farm practices, she has become a "steward of the land,

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

responsible for growing clean, healthy food for [her] community, while doing so in a way that protects and enhances all the soil critters, insects and bees, birds and toads.”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, one of her favorite parts of being a Young Farmer is the way she intellectualizes the natural environment surrounding her daily.¹⁹⁵ More specifically, she states:

I like the interplay of all the use of...chaotic forces. The interplay...of natural pest controllers. Barn swallows, and toads, and praying mantises, and assassin beetles...these things are super essential in what we do [on the farm] and we could not do without them. People forget about these forces and how much of a presence they have. I really like that and how all of those things come together.¹⁹⁶

I interpreted this portion of our conversation as a good analogy for how Longstreth envisions herself fitting into her agricultural neighborhood. By this I mean, she thinks of herself as a driving force changing her agricultural landscape, which has been dominated by individuals who identify as white, middle-aged, working- to middle-class, men who reside in rural environments and grow large expanses of corn, soybeans, wheat, or sugar beets. Referencing the same ecological stewardship principles as Sarah Longstreth of Good Stead Farm, other Young Farmers have begun to participate in alternative methods of agriculture and distribute their products at the Midland Area Farmers Market.

3.2.2 *Smitten Mitten Farm*

Smitten Mitten Farm is located in Gladwin, Michigan, a small, agricultural community approximately thirty-five miles northwest of Midland. Originally established as a one thousand-

¹⁹⁴ “Good Stead Farm,” *Local Harvest*, last modified January 13, 2015, <https://www.localharvest.org/good-stead-farm-M65235>.

¹⁹⁵ Sarah Longstreth interview.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

acre cattle farm owned and operated by the Greer family for more than one-hundred twenty years, Leigh Ann McPherson and her partner, Dustin Greer (see Figure 3.18), reclaimed a two-acre piece of the property in 2013 to start a small, sustainable vegetable production operation for themselves, visitors to the Midland Area Farmers Market, and through their online vegetable ordering service.¹⁹⁷ Although her partner's family has been involved in the agricultural industry for several generations, McPherson relocated to Virginia (with Greer quickly following), to internship on a much smaller farm which practiced sustainable methods of agriculture in order to gain experience and learn how to manage such an operation. Upon returning to Michigan, they continued practicing these alternative agriculture practices which they became more familiar with during their travels.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Smitten Mitten Farm does not participate in a CSA membership. They send out a mass availability email every Sunday and their customers respond with what vegetables they require. Then, these Young Farmers distribute their produce at four local businesses used as drop off sites. They place labels on individual boxes with the customers name on it. The customer receives an itemized invoice at the end of the month. Smitten Mitten Farm uses this service as a means for people who are unable to attend the Midland Area Farmers Market (i.e. working professionals, the elderly community, etc.) to receive fresh produce. Additionally, Smitten Mitten Farm donates their surplus produce to local homeless shelters and food banks where people in need can benefit from it.

¹⁹⁸ After graduating from Midland High School, Leigh Ann McPherson was a “vagabond punk” for about ten years, travelling and creating life experiences. After volunteering in the community garden at a drug rehab facility, she became interested in growing her own food. Additionally, it should be noted here, Midland, Michigan is a large enough district so that there are two high schools in the city: Midland High School and Hubert Henry Dow High School. However, each school location has its own distinguishing stereotypes between the students upon which both of my informants in this chapter commented. They were both graduates of Midland High School. Yet, they stated many students from Hubert Henry Dow High School seemed to have more opportunity than they did and lived experiences of greater privilege. Moreover, they believe that it was partly due to their humble backgrounds which led them to participate in self-sufficiency and sustainable lifestyles.



Figure 3.18 Leigh Ann McPherson and her partner, Dustin Greer, display their sign for Smitten Mitten Farm located in Gladwin, Michigan at the Midland Area Farmers Market, summer 2017. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.

Situated on a rural, dirt road and surrounded by Amish neighbors, Smitten Mitten Farm consists of a self-built infrastructure, including a tiny house structure, a greenhouse, and a hand-dug well.¹⁹⁹ As McPherson articulates, the farm grows “all the fancy stuff” to keep up with food scene trends and selects different crops annually with sustainability principles in mind.²⁰⁰ More specifically, the farm produces items which are popular foods to purchase at the MAFM. These

¹⁹⁹ As a personal anecdote, when I was driving through the mid-Michigan countryside and searching for Smitten Mitten Farm, I was unable to find it based off the directions provided to me from a simple address search using Google Maps. Although I am extremely familiar with the area where the farm is located, Smitten Mitten Farm remained concealed on a secluded tract of land without any distinguishing demarcations and I had to telephone for further instructions in order to access the property. Moreover, when I questioned McPherson about this aspect of her farm, she laughed joyfully and expressed that farm is purposefully in this location and she is glad that it is difficult to find.

²⁰⁰ Leigh Ann McPherson, interview by author, December 4, 2017.

include: string beans, Asian greens, varieties of kale and chard, beets, carrots, several assortments of lettuce and lettuce blends, all sorts of hard squashes, summer squash, zucchini, melons, garlic scapes, a whole bunch of different onion varieties, cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, root crops including potatoes, parsnips, and root salsify. They also produce all sorts of radishes, varieties of turnips and rutabagas, tomatoes, eggplants, as well as multiple types of herbs to distribute to their customers. Additionally, they have chickens for egg production, have planted apple trees for future fruit harvests, and have placed a variety of other trees to act as a wind barrier for their seasonal crops.²⁰¹ However, they also cultivate cover crops of buckwheat and sweet clover to enrich their soils, while also using their harvests for more personal and public health reasons.²⁰²

Furthermore, Smitten Mitten Farm is “trying to bring back some of the old crops that were used back in the Victorian era before mass refrigeration, back before even we had greenhouses...and people relied a lot on crops that were over wintered.”²⁰³ By growing these specific crops, these Young Farmers intend to demonstrate how they are invested in promoting a healthy lifestyle within their community. More specifically, they produce crops which are “really high in fiber and just an amazing amount of vitamins and minerals that are essential for this

²⁰¹ Kaitlin Thorne, “Stewards of the Land – Smitten Mitten Doesn’t Let the Simple Life Go to Waste,” June 13, 2018, https://www.gladwinmi.com/community/stewards-of-the-land---smitten-mitten-doesn-t/article_2370b7d4-6db0-11e8-9e23-638aa38891cc.html.

²⁰² After processing the buckwheat, they use this flour throughout the winter and the sweet clover is planted for the bees which are kept on the property. There is only one hive in production which does not elicit enough honey to distribute to the consumers at the farmers market. Therefore, they enjoy this novelty for themselves.

²⁰³ Leigh Ann McPherson interview.

latitude to continue processing Vitamin D.”²⁰⁴ As McPherson suggests, sometimes these types of crops are celebrated in a region which can experience rather harsh winters. Along with the remoteness of Smitten Mitten Farm, McPherson and Greer like to promote their farm’s uniqueness by establishing a certain aesthetic to their customers.

Previously, McPherson worked at Whole Foods and other supermarkets where she learned to display produce according to their standards. At the Midland Area Farmers Market, she duplicates this process and works hard to display the farm’s produce in a pleasing way to draw in more customers (see Figure 3.19). She states:

Having clean, fresh, colorful [produce], I think there’s a lot to be said about the contrast of color and how that can draw people in. Whether they’re aware of it or not. They’ll actually get closer to [our farmer’s market booth]. There’s that innate thing that people are drawn to contrasting colors. So, that’s a little “sciency” [sic] based but, kind of seeing what looks good and going from there and have the confidence that, ‘Oh, yeah! It does look pretty good, doesn’t it?’ That helps.²⁰⁵

However, McPherson is unsure whether that same vibrancy applies to her personal aesthetic. More specifically, she believes that sometimes she and her partner have to overcompensate with the display of their vegetables because their nonconformist, personal appearance may deter consumers from approaching their booth. She suggests especially in Midland’s aging community, the generation before them may have depended too much on their appearance. Now she says, “We don’t care about appearance, we have a product to sell, and the product to sell is basically conservation measures for [our community].”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.



Figure 3.19 Produce on display at the Smitten Mitten Farm booth at the Midland Area Farmers Market, summer 2017. As noted in the image, Smitten Mitten Farm produces mostly vegetables using “ecologically sustainable” practices to ensure the best quality for their products. Photograph reproduced with permission by Emily Lyons.

Developing connections with other farmers in the community is a major attraction for the Young Farmers from Smitten Mitten Farm to participate in the Midland Area Farmers Market.

McPherson states:

I guess one of the big things for us as far as being younger...we really enjoy sort of the older farmers. Even though they're not organic. Even though they don't use organic processes. It's their kind of feel and their grit that I am drawn to. I find it just absolutely fascinating. So, we've got a lot of help from some of the older vendors that don't use the same methods as us or grow the same produce as us. But they'll help people out because we're almost kindred in that way and they have a lot of knowledge to dispose. It's amazing, even if it's just emotional. You know, 'This year was rough and next year may

be better. We're in this together.' That's something that I have definitely felt from the other vendors that have been going to the Midland market for a long time.²⁰⁷

It seems that at least from McPherson's perspective, comradery is a key aspect of participating in the farmers market. By communicating with other area farmers there, the alternative farming methods practiced at Smitten Mitten Farm have gained acceptance in the region's agricultural community which has historically represented a larger quantity of family farmers and corporate farms. Although they may have different growing techniques, veteran farmers who have participated longer at the market have dispensed an array of knowledge to their Young Farmer neighbors, all the while distributing their produce to their local consumers. Primarily, one of the key lessons McPherson has learned from aging farmers at the MAFM is how to meaningfully contribute to a community which disguises difference among marginalized groups giving priority to people who exert positions of power and privilege.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the Midland Area Farmers Market located in Midland, Michigan is a unique location to study Young Farmers for several reasons. Most especially, studying Midland, Michigan is critical to my analysis because of the aging demographic of farmers in the region which leaves room for new people interested in agriculture to navigate the landscape. Likewise, it seems as if there is a difference among people who reside within Midland's city limits and others who live in more rural spaces surrounding the municipal area. By this I mean, socioeconomic and sociocultural differences among individuals results in a more diverse variety of food need, thereby producing a space for more Young Farmers to distribute their goods at the farmers market. However, with community growth in mind, the city is dependent on long-standing, big industries such as the Dow Chemical Company and other

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

community development initiatives to generate interest and prosperous possibilities for young people relocating to the area.²⁰⁸ To draw more people to Midland and the surrounding area, these institutions rely on cosmopolitan environment opportunities (i.e. farmers markets) geared towards younger demographics for attention. During my interview with Emily Lyons, she hinted toward the recent push toward gentrification and infrastructural improvements occurring in the downtown Midland area. Likewise, she suggested how local community leaders are attempting to renovate the downtown district to better accommodate a younger demographic employed at the region's corporate businesses by creating a more walkable entertainment and restaurant district.²⁰⁹ In short, the Midland Area Farmers Market is capitalizing on the "farm to table" trend and competing with other farmers market experiences located elsewhere in Michigan. Likewise, Young Farmers near Midland, Michigan use the farmers market to benefit themselves financially, as well as promote environmental sustainability within their centralized community.

²⁰⁸ Emily Lyons interview.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4. UP NORTH: SARA HARDY DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET

During the summer months, traffic is heavy with sedans, pickup trucks, and minivans pulling campers, fishing and speed boats, and all-terrain vehicle trailers on the two-lane highway to their various “Up North” destinations. Many of these vehicles have M-22 bumper stickers or small Michigan map decals plastered to their back windows to communicate their relationship to the area to other drivers. Passing through the small villages of Mesick, Buckley, and Chum’s Corner, the landscape begins to get hillier and the road begins to twist and turn as if it’s a tree-lined rollercoaster. Along with vineyards and the occasional hops farm, a few red painted barns dot the countryside. Cresting the largest hillside, an expanse of pale blue becomes visible in the distance with the first glimpse of Lake Michigan and the skyline of the Traverse City area – a popular tourist, weekend getaway, and vacation destination in the northwestern part of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. Entering the city limits, presidential campaign signs in support of democratic nominee Hillary Clinton become more frequent. Rainbow flags signifying gay pride are flown outside many of the large, freshly painted homes.

Throughout the downtown district, countless local breweries and wineries, cheese and chocolate shops, antique stores and art galleries, as well as several bakeries line the streets of the busy district. Turning right next to the Elks Lodge onto West Grandview Parkway, the big lake looms off to the left as several motel and hotel signs blink “No Vacancy” in red neon lights. Known as “The Cherry Capital,” Traverse City holds a festival for the small stone fruit in early July which makes these streets nearly impassable with the heavy foot and vehicle traffic. Yet, on this Saturday in early August, the “open space” butted up to the lake at Clinch Park is nearly empty except for a few joggers and cyclists out for their morning exercise routines. Pulling into

the lot on the right, a parking spot is easy to find as an elderly couple walk by holding hands heading towards the farmers market.

In this chapter, I explore the “Up North” region of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula and draw attention to three Young Farmers – Loma Farm, Morganic Farm, and Providence Farm & CSA – who distribute their products at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City, Michigan. In a community driven by the region’s tourism industry, this location is interesting because of its uncharacteristic climate which provides a greater amount of opportunities to help diversify their operations. Likewise, with a wide array of people visiting the region, producers are able to connect with a broader network of consumers. Not only do many Young Farmers participate in the farmers market, but they also distribute their products to local restaurants and have gained a following through implementing a CSA membership program. To assist them with marketing, they depend on aesthetics of agricultural nostalgia and practice sustainability principles to draw attention to their specialized and artisanal products and help form relationships with their consumers. However, I argue these structures sometimes reveal an exclusive quality because of affordability, which can limit the people who are able to enjoy them. Therefore, this chapter further addresses the socio-economic tensions imparted at farmers markets and within the American agricultural system by addressing some of the governmental programs helping to alleviate those barriers.

4.1 Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market: A Destination for Tourists and Locals

Occurring every Wednesday and Saturday morning in early May through late October, the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market (see Figure 4.1-4.3) is “one of the largest markets in

the state and the largest market in northern Michigan.”²¹⁰ Focusing specifically on showcasing the region’s diverse agricultural industry, it houses over one-hundred vendors who are growing, producing, and manufacturing value added food products to distribute to local consumers. Some of these producers are making and creating food goods from locally sourced ingredients, such as jams, jellies, and baked goods. However, other than soap, crafts are not allowed to be distributed at the market. Therefore, there is a limited quantity of vendors who sell non-food items.²¹¹ The people working at the market are usually the farmers or manufacturers of these specific foods and products, which creates an educational opportunity for consumers to learn about how these fresh, local ingredients have been generated.²¹²

Viewed as a major draw and as a promotional aspect for Traverse City’s downtown district, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) supervises the infrastructural aspects of the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market and has since 1984.²¹³ Additionally, there is an advisory board made up of city commissioners, DDA members, farmers, and customers, who help shape the farmers market guidelines and control the audit process for participating farmers and vendors.²¹⁴ However, the farmers market’s daily operation is managed by Seeking Ecology

²¹⁰ Nick Viox, interview by author, October 19, 2017.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² “A Fresh Pick for Your Itinerary: Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market Traverse City MI,” *West Bay Beach, Holiday Inn Resort, Traverse City, Michigan*, last modified 2019, <https://westbaybeachresorttraversecity.com/local-guide/a-fresh-pick-for-your-itinerary/>.

²¹³ “Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market,” *Downtown Traverse City*, last modified 2019, <https://www.downtowntc.com/events-attractions/sara-hardy-farmers-market>.

²¹⁴ Nick Viox interview.



Figure 4.1 Throughout the summer months Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market located in Traverse City, Michigan hosts farmers and vendors from three surrounding counties to distribute their goods on Wednesday and Saturday mornings to local residents and tourists in search of healthy, local, artisanal food. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nick Viox.



Figure 4.2 Shoppers fill Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in the early morning hours to retrieve their produce, fall 2018. Building lasting relationships with their customers, some of the farmers and vendors at the market have been distributing their products here since the market's inauguration over thirty years ago. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nick Viox.



Figure 4.3 Fresh, local, colorful produce is what most consumers are in search of at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, summer 2014. Farmers in the region attempt to grow a wide variety of produce to entice more purchasers of their goods. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nick Viox.

Education and Design Solutions, or better known as SEEDS.²¹⁵ The mission statement on the DDA’s website reads, “The purpose of the Market is to create a sales venue for local area farmers, provide opportunity for consumers to purchase quality farm-grown goods, to provide a community gathering place, and to promote and stimulate economic development and create traffic in the Downtown area.”²¹⁶ The DDA’s Communications and Projects Coordinator, Nick Viox clarifies, “One of the great things about our area and northern Michigan in general is the cornucopia of agriculture that we do have, and I think [the market is] a really great celebration of [those elements]. We like to help our farmers celebrate what has really made our region what it is agriculturally and culturally beyond that.”²¹⁷

Consisting of one permanent, awning covered structure, the Sarah Hardy Downtown Farmers Market is normally located in parking lot “B” at the southwest corner of Cass and Grandview Parkway in downtown Traverse City. However, it may change locations periodically to accommodate other local events, such as the National Cherry Festival (occurring annually during the first week of July) and the Traverse City Film Festival (occurring annually during the

²¹⁵ SEEDS is a local, 501(c)3 non-profit organization which “focuses on teaching people skills that will allow them to make better decisions through their lives – how to create better habits, how to maintain a healthy diet, and how to develop job skills...programs are geared toward children and young adults, because they’re the ones who are both starting off in life and can benefit the most from learning new skills.” This description was found in Evan Perry’s article, “SEEDS in Traverse City Promotes Green Education in Northern Michigan,” *MyNorth*, August 19, 2014, <https://mynorth.com/2014/08/seeds-in-traverse-city-promotes-green-education-in-northern-michigan/>.

²¹⁶ “Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market.”

²¹⁷ Nick Viox interview. In his daily work tasks, Viox oversees the farmers market booth assignments, establishes the food assistance program organization, and coordinates the special events which frequently occur at the market. Additionally, he is an avid consumer of the farmers who distribute their products at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market and is a CSA share member with Providence Farm & CSA.

last week of July).²¹⁸ Usually though, it is located directly across from the Clinch Park open space (a prime location for downtown Traverse City foot traffic) under an open-air pavilion.

In recent years, the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market has drastically increased in size, thereby requiring a number of portable tents (see Figure 4.4) to be set up to help aid in creating more space for additional vendors. These tents take over portions of the parking lot temporarily. Due to these additions, there has been much discussion about altering the format of the market to enable more farmers and vendors to participate in the future. Since 2016, the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market has been part of a Michigan Farmer's Market Association (MIFMA) economic impact study which accesses many metric effects of the farmers market on the local economy and aids market organizers with making decisions for the future.²¹⁹ More precisely, this study surveys the market's visitors, compares the prices of products sold at the market, indicates what goods are eligible for SNAP benefits, and provides information about the market vendors, including demographic information about area farmers and their farms.²²⁰ On average, 2,520 people visit the market on Saturday mornings and 1,190 on Wednesdays, with their average purchase \$33 per person. Additionally, 77 percent of farmers market customers

²¹⁸ "Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market."

²¹⁹ As described on the "About Us" page on their website, the Michigan Farmers Market Association was established in 2006 "to promote local food consumption in Michigan by connecting more farmers to consumers through farmers markets." It defines a farmers market as "a public ad recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling direct-to-consumer food and products which they have produced themselves. In addition, the market may include a variety of vendors as determined by market management. A farmers market is organized for the purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, vendors, shoppers, and communities."

²²⁰ Nick Viox interview.



Figure 4.4 In recent years, the number of farmers and vendors has drastically increased at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market which has created an opportunity for growth. In turn additional tents are set up on market days to create more space for more people to distribute their products. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nick Viox.

intend to make other purchases in the nearby downtown Traverse City business district.²²¹

Through the guidance of this report, Nick Viox insists that the DDA envisions the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market as a community gathering space and changes at the venue could prove to be extremely important for how the producer/consumer dynamic influences the regional community and economy. More specifically, there has been an increased discussion about developing an all-weather building which would provide farmers and producers a space to

²²¹ Mark Urban, "Average Customer Spent \$33 at Sara Hardy Farmers Market," *Traverse City Record Eagle*, July 23, 2017, https://www.record-eagle.com/news/business/average-customer-spent-at-sara-hardy-farmers-market/article_613703b3-de1c-5538-b195-655ec4e75a0b.html.

distribute products year-round, thereby increasing their sales and profit margins, as well as give consumers further access to fresh and local foods.²²²

According to Nick Viox, what sets the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market apart from other markets in the state of Michigan is its proximity to the Traverse City downtown district (which provides ease of access to consumers of the market and other local businesses), the number of farmers contributing to the local food scene, the diverse variety of products they grow, and their presentation of “absolutely gorgeous” products at the market. Additionally, he argues that the market generates more commerce because of the type of consumers who visit it daily.²²³ Generally, visitors to the market consist of both tourists and locals, with a greater number of tourists visiting in the peak summer months. However, I argue there seems to be a socio-economic gap between how the farmers and vendors portray some of their artisanal foods and the different types of consumers who frequent the market. More specifically, some farmers present more up-scale produce options which appeal to higher-income clients, and lower-income consumers do not believe they can afford them (or they’re simply unfamiliar with them as ingredients).

Nick Viox insists, “We know that our region grows about seventy-five percent of the variety of Michigan products, so we want to make sure everybody has access to that at our market.”²²⁴ Therefore, the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market encourages farmers to create

²²² Nick Viox interview.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Sue Stuever Battel, “Michigan Farmers Markets: Come for the Farm-fresh Produce, Leave With a Stronger Community,” *Second Wave: Michigan*, July 3, 2017, <http://www.secondwavemedia.com/features/Michigan-farmers-markets-Come-for-the-farm-fresh-produce-leave-with-a-stronger-community-0703.aspx>.

a space where lower-income families still have access to fresh, local foods by participating in food accessibility programs such as EBT/SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks, and Project Fresh.²²⁵ Many of these programs are state-operated and afford family's with lower incomes access to fresh food. More specifically, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a state-wide program funded by the USDA which provides nutrition education and promotes physical activity for children, youth, and adults eligible to receive benefits. The goal of the program is to increase awareness about healthy food choices for people with a limited budget. SNAP eligibility provides individuals with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card which entitles people to a specific amount of monthly funding available to make food purchases.²²⁶ Double Up Food Bucks is a federal project which allows EBT card holders to double the value of federal benefits spent at farmers markets to receive twice the amount of fresh, healthy food.²²⁷ Similarly, Project Fresh (or the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) helps provide healthy and nutritious produce to Michigan's WIC participants, "while fostering economic development by promoting [the] state's diverse agricultural products. The program provides low-income nutritionally-at-risk WIC

²²⁵ There is a much larger discussion about food justice, food accessibility, and economically feasible nutritional food options available through reading various texts, such as: C. Clare Hinrichs' *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability* (2009), Julie Guthman's *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism* (2011), Oran Hesterman's *Fair Food: Growing a Healthy, Sustainable Food System For All* (2012), Philip Ackerman-Leist's *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems* (2013), Robert Paarlberg's *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2013), the film *A Place at the Table* (2013), Mark Winne's *Stand Together or Starve Alone: Unity and Chaos in the U.S. Food Movement* (2017), the film *Sustainable* (2017), and Joshua Sbicca's *Food Justice Now!: Deepening the Roots of Social Struggle* (2018).

²²⁶ "Michigan Food Assistance," *Michigan Department of Health & Human Services*, last modified 2019, <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs>.

²²⁷ "Double Up Food Bucks," *Double Up Food Bucks*, last modified 2019, <http://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org>.

participants with eligible, locally grown, fresh, unprepared fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands throughout Michigan.”²²⁸ Considering this wide array of programs benefiting people who are economically disparaged in the area, I contend the “liberal bubble” encapsulating Traverse City (and the consumers who live there) is misinterpreted. However, some of the Young Farmers of the region aid in the elitist portrayal of this illusion by providing exclusively to niche clientele markets who prefer specialized, high-end products and represent a population which does not reside in the area year-round.

The population of Traverse City grows dramatically during the summer months for a variety of tourist reasons. Yet, in the winter months it is usually considered a small town with a population of approximately 15,000 residents.²²⁹ Though, unlike other rural regions, the political environment of Traverse City is relatively liberal minded. According to the 2018 Grand Traverse County election results, citizens residing within the Traverse City precinct voted with an overwhelming majority for the Democratic governor candidate.²³⁰ However, in the more conservative neighboring township precincts the Republican candidate usually dominated the polls.²³¹ Additionally, the town caters to alternative lifestyles and dietary measures regarding food sustainability, sovereignty, and health concerns with organizations such as Cherry Capital Foods and Oryana notably present in the community, along with a variety of specialty food

²²⁸ “Michigan Food Assistance.”

²²⁹ “Quick Facts: Traverse City, Michigan,” *census.gov*, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/traversecitycitymichigan/PST045217>.

²³⁰ “Grand Traverse County Michigan, Certified Official Results,” *michigan.gov*, last modified November 6, 2018, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/Grand_Traverse_Poll_Results_641197_7.pdf.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

markets and restaurants. Cherry Capital Foods is a food wholesaler specializing in local products of the northwestern Michigan area. They focus on further establishing regional foodsheds by transporting products for area farmers, while supporting Michigan's economy and environment.²³² Established in 1973, Oryana Community Co-op began as a buying club to obtain fresh, wholesome food at fair prices. Now, their mission is "to provide high-quality food produced in ecologically sound ways at fair value to owners and the community. [They] are committed to enhancing their community through the practice of cooperative economics and education about the relationship of food and health."²³³ Many regional Young Farmers distribute their foods through these organizations to supplement their farmers market business, including the examples I mention through the remainder of this chapter.

4.2 Young Farmers in the "Up North" Region

Considered to be one of Michigan's premier tourist destinations, "Up North" seems more like a directional route rather than a verifiable place. Yet, it seems Traverse City, Michigan is the unambiguous "Up North" epicenter at least in the minds of many tourists, vacationers, locals, and Young Farmers. With a relatively short travel time, the location of Traverse City is arguably ideal for getaways from larger metropolitan areas in southern Michigan and the northern portions of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Though, it draws tourists from national and global communities as well. Surrounded by freshwater lakes, ski resorts, a vibrant artistic community, and the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Traverse City has historically been known as a peaceful retreat

²³² "Cherry Capital Foods," *Cherry Capital Foods*, last modified 2018, cherrycapitalfoods.com.

²³³ "Oryana," *Oryana Co-operative*, last modified 2018, <https://www.oryana.coop/>.

for industrial executives in more metropolitan areas such as Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Midland, as well as Chicago, South Bend, Indianapolis, Toledo, and Cleveland. I argue that class distinction is a key factor to people visiting this specific location because it represents the affordability of mobility and taking a vacation. With this in mind, Michigan's infrastructure has catered to the region's tourist industry by implementing a highway system with Traverse City as its primary destination point. More specifically, most Michigan highways point toward an "Up North" direction. Traverse City alone draws over 3.3 million visitors annually, with over \$1.18 billion directly filtering into the city's commerce.²³⁴

Positioned directly on the shores of Lake Michigan, Traverse City is situated at the base of Grand Traverse Bay and acts as a gateway to both the Leelanau and Old Mission Peninsulas. It is an area known for its unique climatic zone, which enables it to produce a diverse variety of crops. More specifically, the region falls in a relatively warm plant hardiness zone which allows plants to be cultivated sooner in the spring and survive longer into the winter months than other places in Michigan (see Figure 4.5). Other notable environmental factors such as prevailing westerly, cooler air winds coming in from off of Lake Michigan, a rich, moist sandy loam soil, seasonably high humidity levels, the average amount of annual snow fall, and a mixture of sun-filled and cloudy winter days also add to the region's agricultural success.²³⁵ To many, the area is reminiscent of the growing climate in parts of California which perhaps suggests why there is such a wide range of agricultural goods produced there (e.g. fruits such as apples, tart cherries,

²³⁴"Economic Impact," *Traverse City, Michigan*, last modified 2019, <https://www.traversecity.com/about-traverse-city-tourism/economic-impact/>.

²³⁵ Additional extensive information regarding the environmental structure of the Grand Traverse region has been conveyed in various governmental reports, such as: the USDA's "Grand Traverse County Soil Survey" (1966) and U.S. Census Bureau documents pertaining to specific Michigan counties.

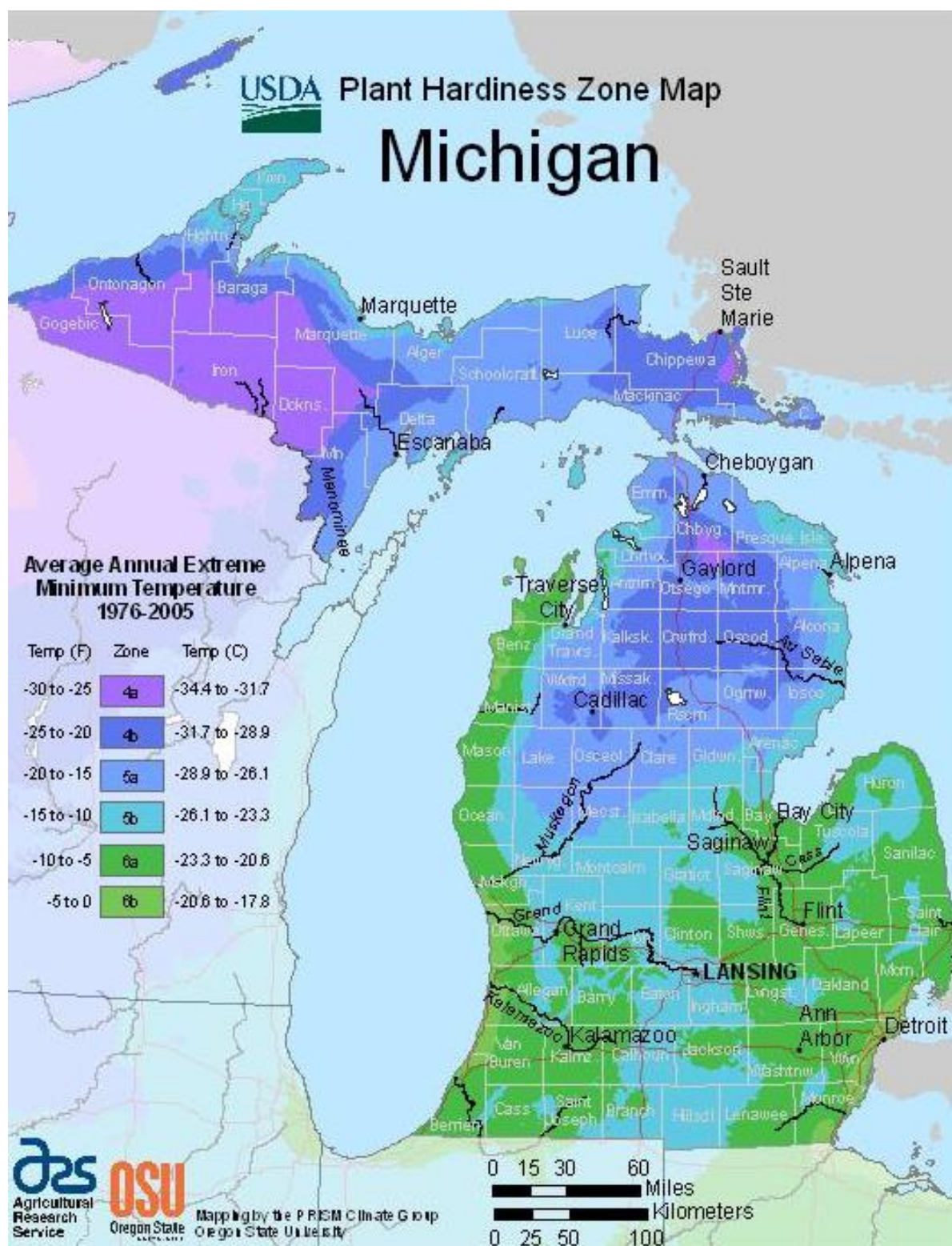


Figure 4.5 Michigan's plant hardiness zone map. Located in the northwest corner of the lower peninsula, Traverse City resides in one of the most desirable locations to plant crops in the state. Photo courtesy of USDA Agricultural Research Service.

grapes, as well as a large variety of vegetables).²³⁶ However, I also argue that other socio-political and socio-economic factors have added to the exceptional quality of the region's farming industry and thusly, draws in Young Farmers relocating to the area (see Figure 4.6).

4.2.1 Loma Farm

Although Nic Theisen's (see Figure 4.7) grandparents owned and operated a Michigan dairy farm, it was not an active part of his childhood. When he was seventeen, Theisen moved out West to study conservation biology. As part of his requirements for graduating, he convinced the Agricultural Sciences department at Colorado State University to allow him to intern on a farm. This was a pivotal moment, which inspired him to keep interning on local Colorado farms for quite some time afterwards. On these small farms, Theisen gained experience mostly in vegetable production. However, he also learned about raising pork and laying hens and how they fit in with the environmental aspects of sustainable farm systems where he was working. Additionally, it was on one such farm in Fort Collins, Colorado where he started his first CSA membership program. After gaining further experience on his own rented land, he recognized the

²³⁶ Most specifically, there are a large number of wineries near Traverse City. Situated astride the 45th northern parallel, the region specializes in white grapes known for rieslings which grow well in the summer months and late fall. Additionally, this industrial aspect lends to the agritourism trade for which the region is known. Many of these wineries participate in tastings and tours throughout the year. Other opportunities for agricultural tourism are manufactured by visiting local farms in the area. A large body of literature has been written regarding the global agritourism industry and food tourism with such works including: Donald Getz et. al. *Foodies and Food Tourism* (2014), eds. Ian Yeoman et. al. *The Future of Food Tourism: Foodies, Experiences, Exclusivity, Visions, and Political Capital* (2015), John Stanley and Linda Stanley's *Food Tourism: A Practical Marketing Guide* (2015), Sally Everett's *Food and Drink Tourism: Principles and Practice* (2016), Susan Slocum and Kynda Curtis's *Food and Agricultural Tourism: Theory and Best Practice* (2017), and Chris Ying and Rene Redzepi's *You and I Eat the Same: On the Countless Ways Food and Cooking Connect Us to One Another* (2018).

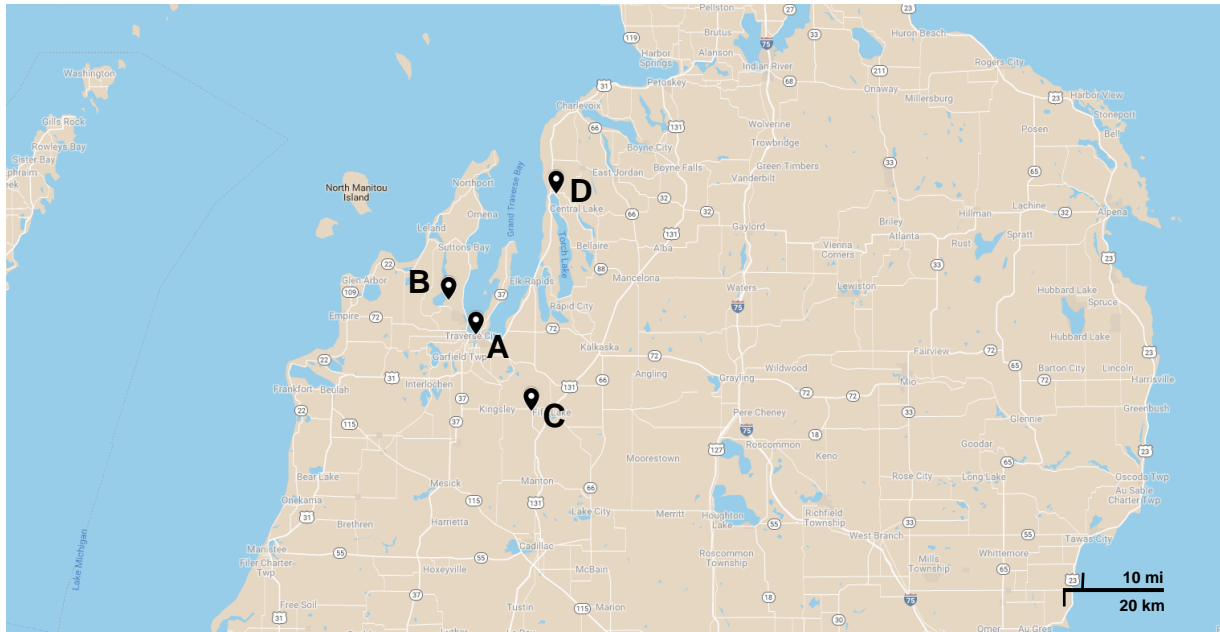


Figure 4.6 A bird's eye view map of the northern area of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Landmark locations are as follows: (A) Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, (B) Loma Farm, (C) Morganic Farm, and (D) Providence Farm & CSA. Map produced by author.



Figure 4.7 Nic Theisen from Loma Farm located just outside of Traverse City, Michigan, fall 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.

property values in Colorado were out of his family's budget to purchase for their own agricultural operation. After this realization, Theisen and his family, decided to relocate to the Midwest in order to find a more affordable property to farm.²³⁷

In 2010, Theisen and his family relocated approximately eight miles northwest of Traverse City, Michigan and established Loma Farm. The Theisen's found their property after searching other Midwest locations, specifically in northeastern Iowa, eastern Minnesota, and parts of Wisconsin. They narrowed their search to about half a dozen small towns, with Traverse City placing last on their list. They chose these locations by contacting each place's local Chamber of Commerce and asking specific questions about farmers market sites and the competition of similar style farms to what they were expecting to offer. Searching for real estate with access to public land, they ended up choosing Traverse City because of the opportunity the region's climate provided for their farming endeavors.

Loma Farm (see Figure 4.8-4.9) is a small-scale farm operation which resides on thirteen-acres of property, with six to seven acres dedicated to vegetable and flower production. Similar to other farms in the area, Loma Farm diversifies their consumer base as much as possible in order to maximize their profit margin. As described on the farm's website, they "grow following organic practices with a deep concern for the health of the land and a love of high-quality produce. [They] supply area restaurants with [their] vegetables, attend farmer's market[s], and distribute weekly through [their] vegetable share program."²³⁸ About adjusting the focus away from simply selling at the local farmers market, Theisen states:

²³⁷ Nic Theisen, interview by author, January 17, 2018.

²³⁸ "Loma Farm," *Loma Farm*, last modified 2018, <http://lomafarm.com/>.



Figure 4.8 A view of Loma Farm located just outside of Traverse City, Michigan, summer 2015. Specializing in vegetable and flower production, Loma Farm diversifies their products as much as possible to generate the greatest interest from local consumers. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.



Figure 4.9 Another view of Loma Farm, summer 2015. Residing on thirteen acres of property, the farms devotes six to seven acres solely to the production of organic produce. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.

Farmers markets are the least important part of our sales. They only make up 10% of our sales. [In Colorado,] we used to focus 90% of our sales on the farmers market. But, we knew we didn't want to do it [in Michigan]. We knew we didn't like working on the weekend. We didn't want to risk the weather. We just didn't want to be off the farm, schlepping our goods. So, we knew we wanted to move somewhere, where we could focus on restaurants and small grocery store sales. And, we saw that Traverse City had a burgeoning restaurant scene that was really small. So, we wanted to focus on CSA or market, not both.²³⁹

Although Theisen does not rely on the regional farmers market locations to produce a large amount of Loma Farm's profit, Loma Farm still participates in the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market on Wednesdays. I argue that participating in the farmers markets even in a small capacity, it still plays a major role in the way consumers recognize the exceptional aspects of Loma Farm's products. More specifically, it enables Traverse City consumers the opportunity to identify what specialty items are in production at Loma Farm.

Primarily, Theisen tries to keep the variety of produce grown at Loma Farm as diverse as possible. The list is created by the ingredients which their restaurant clientele requires for specific recipes, focusing primarily on "extra fancy and old timey" vegetables.²⁴⁰ These include varieties of: arugula, leeks, beets, bok choy, tatsoi, other grazing greens, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, all sorts of winter squashes, turnips, kale, zucchini and other summer squashes, strawberries, sorrels, scallions, a bunch of different radishes, peas, a bunch of varieties of tomatoes, onions, parsnips, Napa cabbage, kohlrabi, head lettuce, fennel, garlic, shallots, chives, a number of different cut flowers, fava beans, cucumbers, tons of herbs, basil, thyme, cilantro, lemon verbena, mint, parsley, dill, lemon balm, chervil, micro greens of a fairly diverse selection, and some small fruits, currants, gooseberries, elderberries. Loma Farm also has

²³⁹ Nic Theisen interview.

²⁴⁰ "Loma Farm," *Taste the Local Difference*, last modified 2016, <https://www.localdifference.org/find-food-farms/find-food-farms.html/264-1/>.

apple trees planted for future production purposes and approximately two-hundred logs for mushroom cultivation.²⁴¹ Other than growing the most diverse variety of vegetables possible, Theisen explains that they are also trying to generate the most perfect product at Loma Farm.

The exceptional appearance of Loma Farm's vegetables usually means people will find them 100% useable. Additionally, the close proximity between the farm's location with their customers benefits the freshness quality of their products. Furthermore, Theisen pays special attention to small details before distributing them, such as washing the vegetables to display the most pristine product available. After visiting the Loma Farm booth at the Sara Hardy Farmers Market, the superior aesthetic quality of Loma Farm's produce is evident (see Figure 4.10-4.11). Referencing these distinguishing qualities, Theisen claims:

I think more than anything it's just the quality. Quality, but also concern in general. I think that's communicated by the beauty aspect. I think also the style. People are attracted to style. It's not trying to be cool or different, but just style and paying attention to [details]. Even the angle or the way you place things on a table...when you buy a CSA share, or for the restaurant, and you open the box – it's exciting! You can see the kale. You see the basket. It's attractive and I think that all that has to do with style. Style and attraction. And, that's why people like it. The same things with the [farmers] market. Even people who food is not their thing...you can just see the magnetic pull...you can see how they look at the food. They don't understand how they're attracted to it, but they are. They come and even if they don't buy, you can see that there's something happening there. They can see the style and the care put into growing it.²⁴²

However, I would argue that the attractive aesthetic is not merely connected to the food quality, but also related to Theisen and his booth's stylized presentation. More specifically, Theisen brings an antique typewriter with him to the market to generate a newsletter for Loma Farm's CSA members, write poems for his farmers market stall customers, and disperse prosaic wisdom

²⁴¹ Nic Theisen interview.

²⁴² Ibid.



Figure 4.10 At the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, Loma Farm distributes a variety of crops on Wednesday mornings, summer 2015. The booth generates a large amount of foot traffic because of the nostalgia tied to some of the material culture objects Nic Theisen chooses to help display his produce. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.



Figure 4.11 Another version of Loma Farm's aesthetic display, summer 2018. Theisen's original approach to artisanal details are appreciated at the market and drives up his profit margin with the region's consumers. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.

to the community (see Figure 4.12). Additionally, there is a wooden sign designating the farm's name in a stylized font. Furthermore, Theisen personally generates an aesthetic in the clothing he wears and other identifying characteristics. I contend that all of these features create a healthy dynamic between the producer and Loma Farm's consumer.

After the work is complete and the newsletters are composed, farming at its deepest level is a labor of emotions for Theisen which connects him to the global community and the environment. More specifically, Theisen has acquired a large amount of knowledge pertaining to growing food, participating in farming, the environment he surrounds himself with, and the aesthetics tied to each of their individual material cultures through his personal travels. Inspired by the nostalgic experiences he has had around the world, Theisen brings back what he finds most interesting in other global locations and puts it to work on Loma Farm. More precisely, the color combinations of the food he grows are reminiscent of South American culture. Likewise, he's begun cultivating specific varieties of vegetables because of their flavors and tastes especially tied to Latin cuisine. Additionally, his experiences in other parts of the world have led him to practice larger methods of self-sufficiency (i.e. recipes for preserving, pickling, and processing plants for personal use) and environmental sustainability (i.e. planting and harvesting crops by hand, rotating crops to enrich the soil, and embracing diversity) on the farm.²⁴³ About all of these invaluable observations, Theisen proposes:

The farm inspires everything I do. There's something about farming that really shows the reality of life that a lot of other professions don't. It shows that we really have nothing other than what is right here. If the weather is bad, then it affects our crops. That's truly the reality of it. As far as we think we can remove ourselves from our environment, it's a farce. We are never removed from it. The truth is, of course we are dependent 100% on the health of our soil, the health of our water, and I just like how tangible it all is. It's all

²⁴³ Ibid.

*****THE LOMA FARM TRUANT SUN*****
 December 19, 2015 5¢ Issue 7, Season 4.5
 Each week we eat the same produce from the same hill,
 soil & water. We taste the same bitterness and sweetn-
 -ess and crunch and this brings us together. United b-
 -y food we are a tribe of minerals. Even when we are
 not eating together we are eating together. What I am
 trying to say is that we will miss you over the winte-
 -r. Deck the halls with golden beetx balls. Green & w-
 -hite & red & gold are not the colors of the holiday
 they are the colors of the winter. Shades of blue & g-
 -ray and white and dots of dried berries or rose hips
 or sumac or wrinkly apples and the green of spruce &
 fir & pine and in the coldness the tree bark turns fr-
 -om brown to black. In the spirit of color we eat gol-
 -den beets - sweet like the sun and rich like the ear-
 -th and good like the goodness. Leeks are a vegetable
 -. Creamy Leeks w/ Grated Nutmeg: Cut one bundle of
 leeks into coins and wash and drain (contrary to comm-
 -on thought the green part of the stem is good to eat
 *). Melt 2 Tbsp butter in large saute pan over modera-
 -te heat, when foam subsides add the leeks. Add ½ c.
 cream (or milk or yogurt) and bring the liquid to a b-
 -ubble. Simmer for 10 - 15 min. , stirring sometimes.
 Season w/ S & P and several gratings of nutmeg. (Sall-
 -y & Martin Stone). Or make potato leek soup. We real-
 -ly like kale with browned garlic, soy sauce and rice
 vinegar, this very indicative of our hippy roots. The
 kale this week is particularly nice ~~xxxxxxx~~ - a ble-
 -nd of five ~~xxxxx~~ varieties - it highlights why kale
 is fashionable. Saute garlic in oil until ever so sli-
 -ghtly browned, add washed and still wet kale leaves,
 sprinkle with soy sauce and vinegar put a lid on it a-
 -nd cook until you like the texture which in my mothe-
 -r's case is never. #verygreenspinach. I have been te-
 -nding this spinach in the fields since September for
 the sole purpose of giving it to you this very week o-
 -f December. It will certainly improve your life. Try
 a stem. Pan di Zuccherio is sugar loaf. Sugar loaf is
 a type of radicchio. The best of the best. Even thoug-
 -h it is foreign born I think even Donald Trump would
 like it. Its bitter, you can thank me later. The fril-
 -ly upper green part of the leaves are best cooked. I
 -t is the white heart that is the point. Slice it thi-
 -nly like you would cabbage for a slaw. Toss it with
 toasted chopped almonds or walnuts and a sweet balsam-
 -ic vinaigrette and maybe some gorgonzola. A few boil-
 -ed golden beets may be nice. Sugarloaf holds the sec-
 -ret of life. we are so pleased to be living and eati-
 -ng with all of you. thank you. buen provecho.

Figure 4.12 On Wednesday mornings at Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, Nic Theisen can be found behind an antique typewriter in between consumer purchases. He's usually working on the latest edition of his CSA newsletter cheekily titled, "The Virtual Scribe." Additionally, he writes poems and small words of advice for nominal fee for local residents and tourists. Photograph reproduced with permission by Nic Theisen.

right in our face. And I think that is why I got into it. I never planned it. I never expected to become a farmer.²⁴⁴

Regarding the inspirational aspects of the environment and nostalgia about the reasons to enter farming as an occupation, it seems that many of the Young Farmers in the Traverse City region share similar viewpoints.

4.2.2 *Morganic Farm*

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Stuart Kunkle (see Figure 4.13) grew up in a liberal household where environmental issues and green lifestyle practices were worthy causes. He “spent his childhood in the woods” and vacationed for parts of the summer on his grandparents six-acre homestead in the area, which included an apple orchard, a creek, pine trees, and a meadow – “just, an amazing diversity of landscape.”²⁴⁵ Coincidentally, he cites these events as fond memories and recalls them as inspirational in his current interest in pursuing agriculture as a profession.²⁴⁶ After relocating westward to attend college at the University of Oregon, he began working on farms in the Willamette Valley. During this time, he kept a vegetable garden for his personal use and first read Bill Mollison’s *Permaculture: A Designers’ Manual* – which he still considers a key text and influential in the ways that he thinks about land-use ethics.²⁴⁷ After graduation, he spent the next twenty-five years migrating to parts of Montana and Alaska

²⁴⁴ “Downtown Traverse City: Annual Report,” *Downtown Traverse City*, last modified 2017, https://www.downtowntc.com/application/files/3815/1881/9185/Annual_Report_2017.compressed.pdf.

²⁴⁵ Stuart Kunkle, interview by author, July 29, 2017.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ “Morganic Farm,” *Morganic Farm*, last modified 2017, <https://morganicfarm.com/>.



Figure 4.13 Stuart Kunkle of Morganic Farm located in Fife Lake, Michigan near the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City, Michigan, spring 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Stuart Kunkle.

to participate in various forms of alternative lifestyles (i.e. living in a commune in an intentional community of thirty people for three years, homeschooling his children, planning for and producing food on a diversified, permaculture-based farm to support his community, etc.). In 2009, Kunkle, with his family, relocated to Fife Lake, Michigan approximately twenty-three miles southeast of Traverse City to begin a more permanent version of his farm.²⁴⁸

Morganic Farm (see Figure 4.14) is a thirty acre, “quasi-organic” farm system where Kunkle raises heritage breeds of pork, meat rabbits, meat goats, ducks, and laying hens year-round for community consumption.²⁴⁹ During the summer months, Kunkle raises chickens and turkeys for meat purposes, as well as generates a small quantity of organic vegetables for a CSA membership program. More specifically, Morganic Farm grows a variety of fresh produce such as: herbs, beets, green beans, broccoli, cabbage, garlic, carrots, cauliflower, cucumbers, peas, peppers, eggplant, grapes, kale, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, rhubarb, spinach, strawberries, zucchini, and tomatoes. Additionally, Kunkle forages for mushrooms, blueberries, asparagus, and garlic scapes, as well as process animal and vegetable byproducts such as: bread, dressings, jams and jellies, and pickled vegetables. Likewise, he manufactures non-food items like balms, candles, lotion, salves, and yarn from his animal byproducts to distribute locally.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Stuart Kunkle interview. Out of his family members, Kunkle is the only person still interested in farming. He and his wife divorced in 2018. Currently, his children only spend part of their time on the farm. However, he has remained extremely active in his agricultural endeavors and producing food for his local community.

²⁴⁹ Stuart Kunkle interview.

²⁵⁰ “Morganic Farm,” *Taste the Local Difference*, last modified 2016, <https://www.localdifference.org/find-food-farms/find-food-farms.html/838-1/>.



Figure 4.14 A view of Morganic Farm in Fife Lake, Michigan, fall 2018. A large amount of production at the farm is devoted to permaculture practices and “quasi-organic” meat production. More specifically, animals are raised together in the same habitat to create the smallest possible carbon footprint and sustain the natural ecosystem. Photograph reproduced with permission by Stuart Kunkle.

On Morganic Farm, Kunkle practices methods of “permaculture,” which he has learned from a wide variety of books, online articles, and in-person workshops.²⁵¹ By this I mean, he centers his farm operation on the surrounding, natural ecosystem which thereby, creates a way for him to better care for his local community. More specifically, he allows food to grow naturally, without the requirement of chemicals to produce a greater yield. He lets Morganic Farm’s animals do most of the cultivation work rather than depending on mechanical farm equipment and corporate farming techniques to do the job. Furthermore, he practices rotational

²⁵¹ Stuart Kunkle interview.

grazing and pasture management which enables the animals' waste to nourish the land.²⁵² With these principles in mind, he considers himself different than the stereotypical American farmer and strives to accomplish something "more diverse and healthier" on his farm.²⁵³ Bearing in mind these differences, Kunkle claims he could feed approximately ninety people year-round strictly from Morganic Farm's thirty acres. Yet, he wants to engage more people who share common interests with him regarding environmental sustainability measures and his agrarian lifestyle principles.

At the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, Morganic Farm's booth stands out from the other farmers and vendors. Rather than displaying a luscious variety of vegetables, Kunkle himself is the main attraction behind the table. There are binders filled with photographs capturing images of animal breeds and his sustainable farm life experiences. These images provide ways to recreate experiences and help people connect and get excited about Morganic Farm's products. Arguably, the driving principles guiding Kunkle are what make the farm's products unique and a rare find at the market, as well as within Michigan's "Up North" region. Above all, Kunkle is a master story-teller and has become a fixture at the market booth – attending both Wednesday and Saturday morning shifts. Frequently, he reaches in one of a number of coolers to dispense meat products to local consumers. On average, he generates \$525-550 daily at the market. Interestingly, one of the major goals for Kunkle and subsequently, Morganic Farm is to provide the daily needs and wants for the local community. However, they would rather not rely strictly on sales from the farmers market. Therefore, he also distributes goods through direct farm sales which contribute an additional \$200-300 weekly in pork and egg

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

production sales, usually from the tourist traffic driving by Morganic Farm.²⁵⁴ Additionally, he has distributed Morganic Farm's products through third-party vendors in the past to generate more income opportunities (i.e. Cherry Capital Foods and Oryana Community Co-op). However, Kunkle has conflicting viewpoints about his future endeavors on Morganic Farm. At times, he expresses interest in creating a larger operation, widening his area of expertise, and producing a greater amount of goods for a more diverse community. Yet, he realizes he is unable to perform more tasks without additional people to provide farm labor.²⁵⁵ Giving concession to these limiting concerns, Kunkle has differing circumstances from other Young Farmers in the Grand Traverse region.

4.23 Providence Farm & CSA

Providence Farm & CSA (see Figure 4.15) is located in Central Lake, Michigan, a small village community approximately halfway between Traverse City and Petoskey in the northwestern part of the Lower Peninsula. With their entrepreneurial spirits and inspirational personalities, Ryan and Andrea Romeyn (see Figure 4.16), the proprietors of Providence Farm & CSA, do not seem to have an issue finding like-minded individuals interested in working within the agricultural industry and employ about thirty part-time employees to assist them on the farm.²⁵⁶ Although they maintain twenty acres of their own property, they manage a total of roughly one-hundred sixty acres of farmland to supply over seventy varieties of certified organic

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Andrea Romeyn, interview by author, November 2, 2017.



Figure 4.15 A bird's eye view of Providence Farm & CSA located in Central Lake, Michigan a small village northeast of Traverse City. With approximately one-hundred sixty acres in production, the farm specializes in organic produce to distribute to local consumers through a variety of channels. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.



Figure 4.16 Ryan and Andrea Romeyn and their children are the main proprietors of Providence Farm & CSA. With over twenty years of experience, they are hoping to pass along sustainable practices of agriculture to the next generation. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.

vegetables, strawberries, and meat from pastured pork, sheep, and beef to many consumers located in the Grand Traverse region.²⁵⁷ More specifically, the farm produces a wide variety of carrots, salad greens, turnips, cabbage, beans, tomatoes, rhubarb, both winter and summer squashes, potatoes, peppers, beets, cauliflower, leeks, spinach, onions, herbs, cucumbers, broccoli, radishes, asparagus, swiss chard, eggplant, kale, melons, peas, pumpkins, garlic scapes, parsnips, and flowers for local food consumption.²⁵⁸ More importantly, the Romeyns depend on the farm's CSA membership, a variety of regional farmers markets, area food co-ops, local restaurants, and direct on-the-farm sales to distribute the vast amount of goods that the farm produces annually to their local community.²⁵⁹

Originally from cities in southwestern Michigan, both Ryan and Andrea Romeyn come from non-agricultural backgrounds; yet, were interested in pursuing farming during their undergraduate studies. Although Andrea majored in elementary education, Ryan attended a two-year pilot program in sustainable agriculture at Central North Carolina Community College after

²⁵⁷ "Providence Farm & CSA," *Michigan Organic Food & Farm Alliance*, last modified 2016, <http://farmguide.moffa.net/farmpages/0008.html>.

²⁵⁸ "Providence Organic Farm & Market," *Taste the Local Difference*, last modified 2016, <https://www.localdifference.org/find-food-farms/find-food-farms.html/10-1/> It should also be mentioned here that when I was discussing what crops Providence Farm & CSA produces with Andrea Romeyn, she differentiated each of them in the number of *pounds* which each crop generated (i.e. 50,000 pounds of carrots, 10,000 pounds of cabbage, 10,000 pounds of winter squash, etc.). Although she is the farmer with the greatest number of acres in production, I found this type of description daunting because of the diverse variety of vegetables which the farm grows. In my past experience, this type of high quantities had been reserved for farms which usually plant one crop variety.

²⁵⁹ Additionally, Providence Farm & CSA has opened its own farm store located directly on the farm's property. The construction of the store was supervised by Ryan Romeyn. In the storefront, The Romeyn's sell meat and produce grown on location, as well as sponsor other area business products such as fresh baked goods, locally sourced coffee, teas, and cheese, as well as new popular items like kombucha.

the Romeyns were married.²⁶⁰ She clarifies that there was not a program of its kind in Michigan at the time – one which required four-hundred hours of on-farm experience before completing the degree. With his schooling, their perspectives towards sustainable agriculture methods grew. They desired to practice organic methods of agriculture, generate a diverse variety of crops to provide their community with as much fresh produce as possible, and present themselves as stewards of the land which they reside upon to leave it better for future generations.

Now, Providence Farm & CSA depends on their Northern Michigan community to support their agricultural lifestyle. They are committed to enriching the soil on their farm and use organic soil amendments, pest control, crop rotation, cover cropping, and using compost as a primary ingredient to produce optimal growing conditions for their crops.²⁶¹ Due to these measures, they are known in a variety of farmers markets (i.e. the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market, the Boyne City Farmers Market, the Harbor Springs Farmers Market, and three other local markets) for producing superior vegetables. Likewise, they deliver CSA shares to several locations in the area, namely: East Jordan, Petoskey, Bellaire, Beaver Island, Charlevoix, Gaylord, Elk Rapids, Boyne City, and Traverse City, use the farmers markets to distribute CSA shares, and have partnered with a couple of local businesses as CSA drop-off sites to create the widest net for farm consumers.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Andrea Romeyn interview.

²⁶¹ “Providence Organic Farm,” *CSA Farms: Northwest Michigan*, last modified February 13, 2019, <http://www.csafarms.org/pages7888880.asp>.

²⁶² Andrea Romeyn interview. By itself, the CSA program shares produce with approximately four-hundred twenty-five members for twenty-four weeks annually. However, that does not mean they all acquire a food box each week. Andrea Romeyn explains that about sixty members are investor shares; meaning, they provide funding in the spring and receive a percentage of vegetables throughout the year. Additionally, Providence Farm & CSA generally

When they bring the produce grown at Providence Farm & CSA to the local farmers markets, the Romeyns treat their consumers to a celebration. They enjoy going to the market because “it’s like every person in town came out for a party.”²⁶³ Mostly, these Young Farmers recognize that the consumers in the Traverse City region are supportive of local food and the people who grow it. However, they’re also aware that other than merely attending the market as a food retrieval site, the general public uses the area farmers markets as a place for community building. Usually, the farmers know their clientele personally. They’re able to catch up and share stories about the weekly events. Andrea Romeyn told me this familiarity with her customers is what drives the types of crops they grow each year on the farm. Likewise, the familiarity with her customers guides her aesthetic decisions about the appearance of Providence Farm & CSA’s farmers market booth. More specifically, she endeavors to create a colorful, friendly environment as if you were walking into her home.

Although Andrea Romeyn was forced to hire two seasonal employees to work at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market because the Boyne City Farmers Market occurs at the same time, it has not reduced the original aesthetic display of the farmers market stall. While it could be due to appointing two visual artists as farmers market employees, I argue it is also because of Romeyn’s keen eye and attention she pays to detail regarding the appearance of the booth. With that said, the overall aesthetic of Providence Farm and CSA’s farmers market booth is a huge draw to customers purchasing from them (see Figure 4.17-4.18). More specifically, Romeyn situates vegetables at varying heights on tables with some placed at eye-level, which

distributes two-hundred seventy-five boxes of produce weekly of which sixty also include meat raised on the farm.

²⁶³ Andrea Romeyn interview.



Figure 4.17 Consumers choose from a variety of Providence Farm & CSA's table full of produce at the local farmers market, fall 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.



Figure 4.18 Focusing on color contrast and aesthetic principles of design is a major marketing technique for Andrea Romeyn from Providence Farm & CSA, fall 2018. She takes special care when setting up the farmers market booth each morning to ensure her products present themselves in the most pleasing manner to the market's consumers. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.

makes it easier for customers to spot their purchases. Using an empty produce crate as a base, she piles vegetables high to create an illusion of abundance. Additionally, she positions them so that contrasting colors are next to each other, carrots are usually near purple top turnips.

Varieties of red and yellow beets, cabbages, peppers, and eggplants are rotated with leafy, green vegetables. Furthermore, Romeyn uses a water bottle with a spray nozzle to continually mist vegetables throughout the day in order for them to remain more colorful and appear fresh. To display the produce, she uses a variety of dark brown, wicker baskets which contrast with the vibrant hues of the vegetables and red and white country French clothes to cover the tables.

Additionally, Romeyn uses two metal industrial-style signs to display the Providence Farm & CSA name to farmers market customers.²⁶⁴ Regarding these items and the way Romeyn has chosen to configure them, I argue that she intentionally chooses display items to create a nostalgic experience for her consumers. Moreover, I contend that by choosing these materials she is generating images of nostalgia, even if they are not consciously recognized by her or farmers market consumers. Likewise, the material culture represented at the market spills over into other markets that the Romeyn's have created, such as through individual box shares distributed to consumers and the farm market on location at Providence Farm & CSA (see Figure 4.19-4.20). By providing as many options as possible for consumers to receive their products, it demonstrates how the Romeyn's are trying to remain as inclusive as possible to community members in an area embodying exclusivity and marginalization.

By discussing the tourism industry in the "Up North" region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, this chapter centers on the variety of crops harvested in the state and how consumers

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

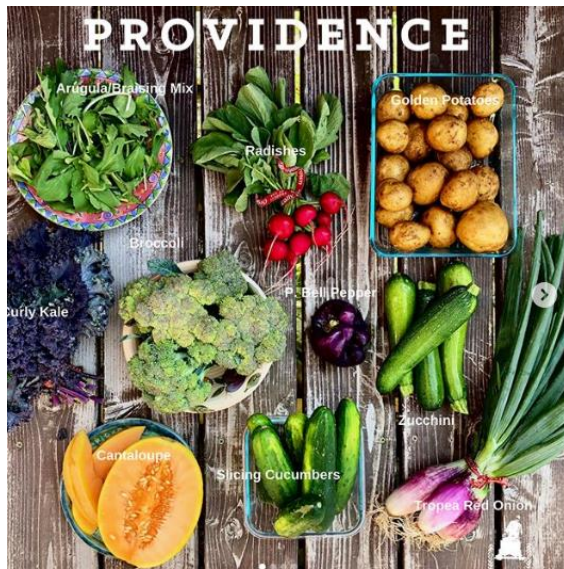


Figure 4.19 Each week produce grown on Providence Farm & CSA is displayed in photographs on social media outlets before being distributed to local shareholders. Usually, these images depict vibrantly colored produce on a neutral colored background to portray higher contrast and present viewers/consumers with a more appetizing product. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.



Figure 4.20 In 2018, Providence Farm & CSA opened a market located directly on the farm's property. Other than the products grown on-site, the market also distributes locally sourced baked goods, cheese, coffee, tea, and kombucha. Photograph reproduced with permission by Andrea Romeyn.

in rural locations become acquainted with produce usually harvested in more global destinations. More specifically, Young Farmers have identified the need to diversify the crops cultivated on their farms based on the tastes of their customers. The special climatic circumstances along the shores of Lake Michigan allow these farmers to capitalize on the fruits of their labor and ensure their customers with a fresh, local product. Additionally, these Young Farmers have created a niche market based on the nostalgic properties of food and agricultural material culture. Ultimately, it seems that the shift in agricultural production has occurred with the expectation that more colorful produce presents a healthier option for consumers which is similar to other locations described in this dissertation. Therefore, growing a wide variety of crops helps Young Farmers with presenting a more marketable and thereby profitable product at the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market and other locations of food distribution.

CHAPTER 5. IN THE CITY: EASTERN MARKET

Travelling southeast on Interstate highway 75, the lights from the city of Detroit, Michigan get brighter with every passing mile. Exits marking the suburbs of Pontiac, Madison Heights, and Royal Oak whizz by with the promise of a quick stop breakfast, cheap coffee, and large shopping centers. Approaching exit 52 and merging onto Mack Avenue just after daybreak, the street lights begin to go out. The radio announcer cuts in with the weather forecast for this particular Saturday in mid-May, “Highs today in the upper 50s to mid-60s. Partly sunny, with a slight chance of rain.” Although a fine mist is currently glazing the windshield, it sounds like it’s going to be a perfect day to do some shopping at Eastern Market – the public market which serves wholesale and retail businesses with both food and non-food items in the neighborhood mere miles away from Detroit’s city center.²⁶⁵

Crossing over Chrysler Service Drive, the neighborhood street signs don a mixture of tributes to the automotive industry and French origin family names such as Rivard, Erskine, Orleans, St Aubin, Dubois, and Gratiot. After parking near the mural on the corner of Riopelle and Adelaide Streets, a crowd gathers as the mostly African-American member Southfield-Lathrup Marching Band begins to perform Rihanna’s song “Umbrella” nearby. Their dance team encourages people to join them. Before turning to the main market sheds where numerous stalls are filled with wholesalers, farmers, and vendors peddling their produce, food goods, and farm products, a group of hare krishnas from the local International Society of Krishna Consciousness temple parade by in brightly colored clothing, chanting and playing musical instruments just as the sun breaks through the clouds.

²⁶⁵ Dan Carmody, interview by author, November 7, 2017.

Embedded in this urban setting, Eastern Market is a special site to examine when considering the social, cultural, economic, and environmental shifts occurring in American agriculture and the farmers who represent those landscapes. More explicitly, the city of Detroit, Michigan has not been depicted as an agricultural location until very recently. Usually, stories of the city's rich history revolve around the automotive industry. However, Detroit also has deeply rooted issues with the racial and economic makeup of its inhabitants because of that trade. As with most cases of people in positions of power and privilege, Detroit's white, upper-class has controlled the socio-political atmosphere of the city. Historically, Henry Ford's eugenics-based philosophy relegated the city's African-American population to reside in a specific district and other neighborhoods housed people of other ethnic backgrounds. All the while, many whites moved further from the city center to nearby Detroit suburbs. Of course, various problems arose from these practices and many witnessed the prejudicial treatment placed on the lives of marginalized communities.²⁶⁶ Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will argue these racially-motivated events were the catalyst for Detroit's current societal and cultural downfall, as well as its state of distress and population decrease. Furthermore, these circumstances have resulted in the city reconfiguring unused space and rehabilitating zones of devastation for other

²⁶⁶ Several times in the last century, these systemic factors led to Detroit's African-American population at the forefront of current events. More specifically, I'm referring here to the Great Migration between 1915-1960, the 1967 riot, gang related activities occurring through the 1980s and 1990s. As Mark Sundeen writes in *Unsettlers: In Search of the Good Life in Today's America* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2017): "With its booming auto plants that hired across racial lines, Detroit was the Great Migration's fourth-largest magnet after New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Between 1910 and 1940, its black population soared from 5,000 to 150,000. That number doubled in the next decade, as blacks replaced white workers drafted into World War II. By 1960, 480,000 African Americans lived in Detroit. They constituted 40 percent of the workforce at Ford's River Rouge plant, and a similar portion across the industry...Between 1950 and 1980, while the population of Detroit dropped from its high of 1.8 million to 1.2 million, the black population jumped from 300,000 to 759,000. Meanwhile the number of whites plummeted from 1.5 million to 400,000," 141-143.

purposes of economic recovery. In recent years, Young Farmers have migrated to these impoverished Detroit neighborhoods to revitalize them by forming urban farms which appeal to young people with affluent tastes gentrifying the area. Similar to previous chapters, I introduce four specific case studies to demonstrate how Young Farmers have used Eastern Market to create dynamic local networks between producers and consumers. Subsequently, this chapter also depicts how Young Farmers have moved beyond the confines of rural America to address the benefits of establishing farming structures to other settings.

5.1 Eastern Market: Detroit's Agricultural Hub

The first public market in Detroit, Michigan was established in 1802 as an ordinance of the city charter and was situated at Fort Pontchartrain on the Detroit River (see Figure 5.1). By 1843, a new market called City Hall Market, or Central Market, was built near city hall at Cadillac Square and became Detroit's primary market. Outside of the Fort Pontchartrain district, Detroit's early settlers (mainly of French origin) farmed long, narrow strips of land called "ribbon farms" which stretched northward from the Detroit River for irrigation purposes (see Figure 5.2).²⁶⁷ With the increasing population of Detroit in the mid-19th century, the city purchased a portion of one of these ribbon farms to use for a new cemetery. By 1891, the City Hall Market land at Cadillac Square became too valuable to continue being used for a market, forcing it to split in two with a portion of the farmers relocating to Western Market (at Michigan

²⁶⁷ Randall Fogelman and Lisa E. Rush, *Detroit's Historic Eastern Market* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 7.

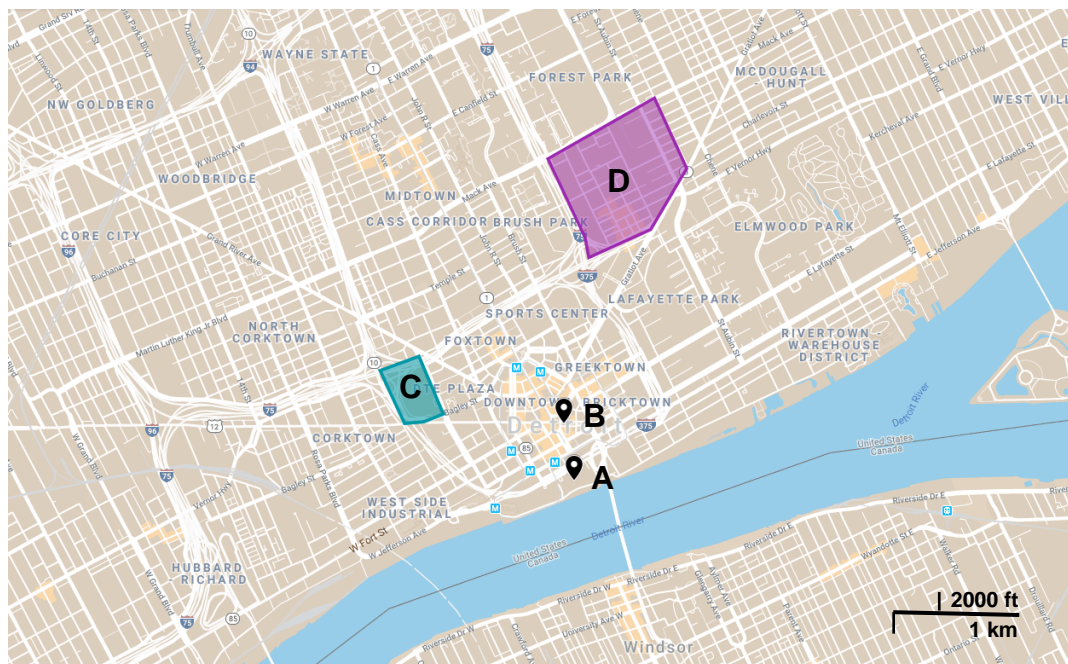


Figure 5.1 A current map of Detroit, Michigan with historical locations references: (A) location of Fort Pontchartrain, (B) location of City Hall Market, (C) location of Western Market (which is no longer in operation), and (D) location of Eastern Market. Map produced by author.

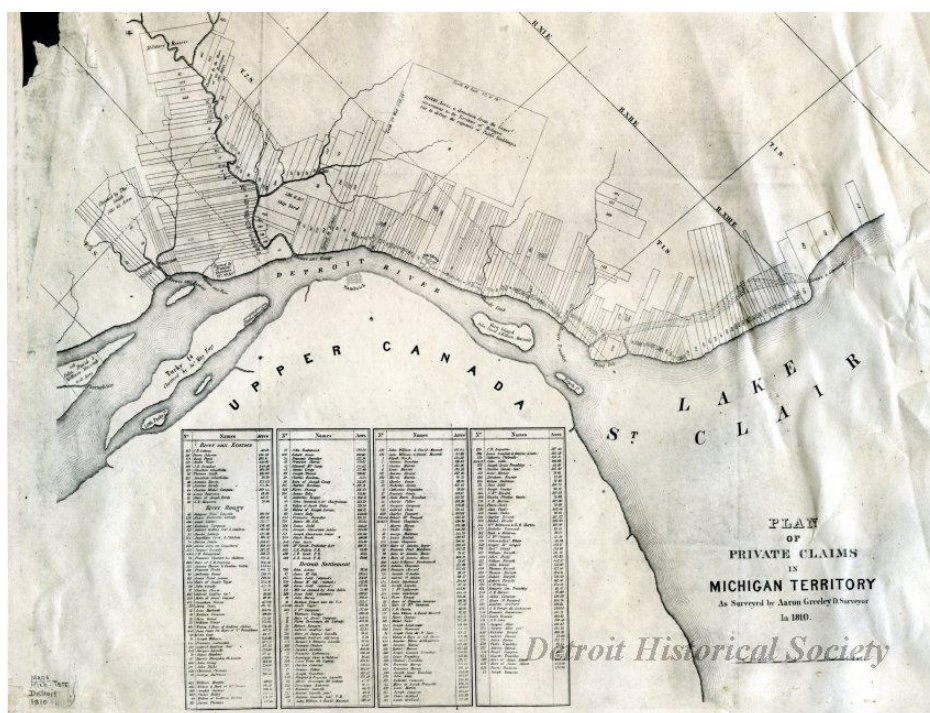


Figure 5.2 Historical map of “ribbon farms” located in Detroit, Michigan in 1810. These farms gave easy access to regional waterways. Map housed at Detroit Historical Society, Detroit, Michigan. Reproduced with permission by Jeremy Dimick.

Avenue and Eighteenth Street) and the remaining farmers relocating to Eastern Market, a plot of recently cleared land on the south end of the cemetery.²⁶⁸

At the turn of the 19th century, the Eastern Market district looked completely different than it does today. As immigrants came westward with the opening of the Erie Canal, ethnic communities began to migrate to the Detroit area. Germans first settled in the area just south of Eastern Market (now known as Greektown). As the population grew, their community moved north along Gratiot Avenue.²⁶⁹ The number of family homes, apartment buildings, and rooming houses in the neighborhood began to increase and the Polish and Italian communities began getting larger in size as well.²⁷⁰ These groups brought their customs and traditions with them to the community. Breweries and churches were regular establishments in the growing district; yet, the farmers market located at Eastern Market's core remained the primary gathering place to source agricultural products and create important social ties.²⁷¹

Currently, the Eastern Market district resides on a fourteen-acre section of Detroit located just northeast of the Chrysler and Fisher Freeway interchange (see Figure 5.3). "Specialty shops, bakeries, spice companies, meat and poultry markets, restaurants, jazz cafes, old-time saloons, produce firms, gourmet shops, cold-storage warehouses" spread across the three-square mile neighborhood.²⁷² Fundamentally speaking, Eastern Market still centers on the very large, year-

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Lois Johnson and Margaret Thomas, *Detroit's Eastern Market: A Farmers Market Shopping and Cooking Guide* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 5.

²⁷¹ Fogelman and Rush, *Detroit's Historic Eastern Market*, 7.

²⁷² Johnson and Thomas, *Detroit's Eastern Market*, 4-5.

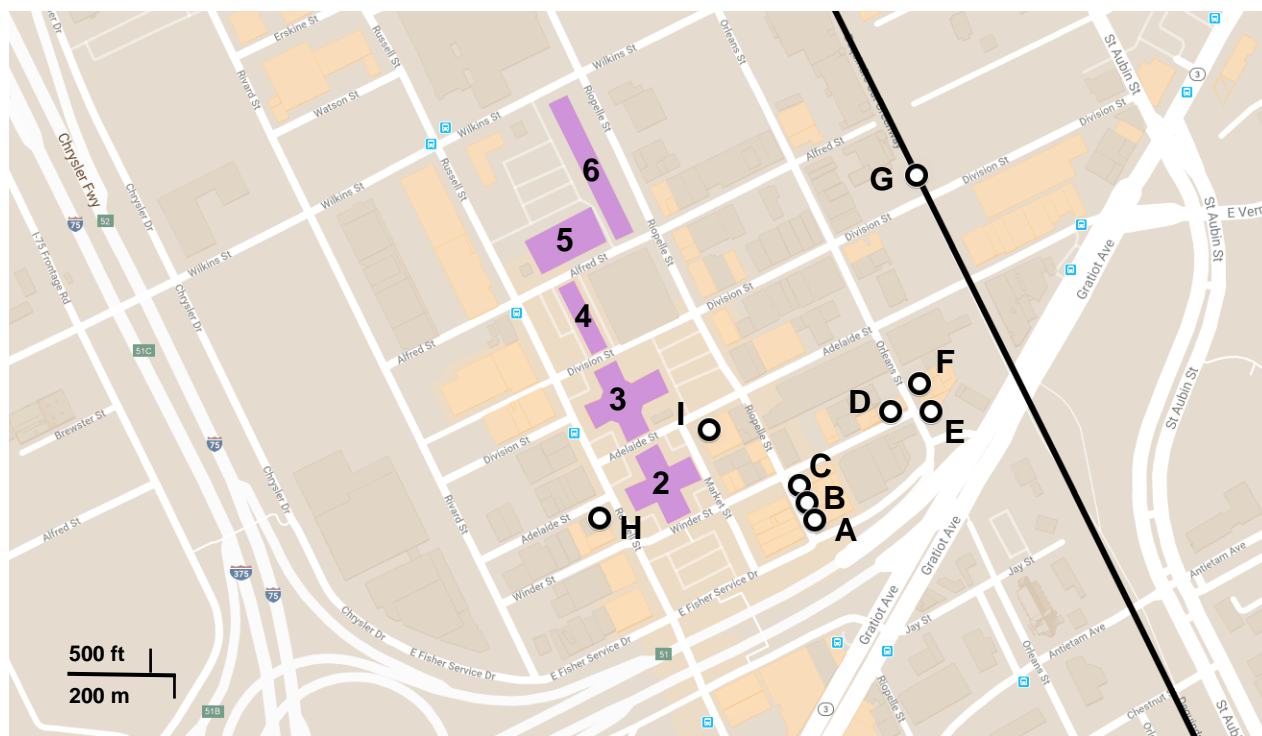


Figure 5.3 A bird's eye view map of Eastern Market with market "shed" numbers designated. Other neighborhood landmark locations are: (A) Detroit City Distillery, (B) Henry the Hatter, (C) Beau Bien Fine Foods, (D) E & B Brewery/Red Bull Arts Detroit, (E) Berry and Sons Islamic Slaughter, (F) E. W. Gobbels Sons, (G) Dequindre Cut Greenway, (H) Germack Pistachio Company, and (I) Farmer's Restaurant. Map produced by author.

round farmers market which takes place on Saturdays to provide plants, flowers, fruits and vegetables, specialty food, prepared food, and other agricultural products for the people of Detroit from regional farmers.²⁷³ Yet, there are also other seasonal markets which occur on

²⁷³ As Johnson and Thomas state in *Detroit's Eastern Market*: "Regional farmers" here consist of growers from Michigan, northeast Ohio, and southwestern Ontario, Canada. Historically, these farmers would travel long distances in order to sell their produce; sometimes, "arriving in the middle of the night and sleeping in their trucks until the Market opened. There were so many of them that they had a one-stall limit rented in three-hour shifts. Their customers came in the family car, by bus, or by foot; many did their own canning or putting-by for the winter, and their only other food source was the corner grocery store, which often meant higher prices and limited variety," ix.

Tuesdays and Sundays throughout the months of June through November. While the market on Sundays showcases local artisans, musicians, and street food vendors, the Tuesday market is simply a pared down version of the Saturday market for the general public to purchase fresh produce during the week. Additionally, the farmers market is open in the early Tuesday morning hours for local restaurants, independent grocery stores, and some large-scale stores to purchase products at a wholesale price.²⁷⁴

Farmers market producers distribute their goods under five buildings, called “sheds,” constructed mostly of brown brick in varying styles of architecture (see Figure 5.4-5.7). The oldest remaining structure, Shed 2 was built in 1898 and exemplifies Victorian stalls that were scaled to size for horse-drawn carriages rather than motorized vehicles. During the period of Detroit’s greatest industrialization, Shed 3 was built in 1922 with smaller stalls to accommodate the compact trucks of the time. Additionally, this building took place of the portion of the market dedicated to selling hay and wood (both of which were becoming more obsolete in a growing city). Over time, this building would be renovated to include walls better suited for the all-weather, year-round market. In 1938, Shed 4 was erected as a simple, steel-framed structure without exterior walls and no ornamental detail which demonstrates the city coming out of the Great Depression. Replacing an already existing structure, Shed 5 was added in 1981 and has enclosed walls. It is quite similar to Shed 3; yet, it also houses a community kitchen to foster local food entrepreneurship. Lastly, Shed 6 was erected in 1966 to take place of other structures

²⁷⁴ Dan Carmody interview.



Figure 5.4 An exterior view of Shed 2 at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, spring 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Samuel Morykwas.



Figure 5.5 An exterior view of Shed 3 at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, spring 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Samuel Morykwas.



Figure 5.6 An interior view of Shed 3 at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, spring 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Samuel Morykwas.



Figure 5.7 An exterior view of Shed 5 at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, summer 2017. Photograph reproduced with permission by Samuel Morykwas.

which were being demolished for other city purposes. It is an open- architecture.²⁷⁵ Originally, the open-air structure of the building allowed farmers to bring produce within close proximity to their customers without much heavy maneuvering and its air structure with skylights placed in the roof in order for sunlight to reach the walkway pedestrian pathway below.²⁷⁶

Local businesses, wholesale warehouses, butchers, breweries, distilleries, and restaurants, some of which date back to the institution of the market, skirt the centralized sheds. Others are very recent additions to justify the gentrification changes occurring in Detroit's community.²⁷⁷ Many of these places purchase or use products grown by the farmers who distribute their goods there. Some others produce their own foodstuffs to sell in the farmers market stalls. In a storefront on the corner of the East Fisher Service Drive and Riopelle Streets, Detroit City Distillery creates "small batch artisanal whiskey, gin, and vodka using the finest local ingredients sourced directly from farms near our distillery."²⁷⁸ Similarly, Beau Bien Fine Foods has been

²⁷⁵ It should be noted here that there was an original shed (known as Shed 1) built in 1891. However, it was demolished in 1967 in order to build Interstate 75 connector to the Fisher Freeway, as well a parking lot. Fogelman and Rush, *Detroit's Historic Eastern Market*, 11.

²⁷⁶ Fogelman and Rush, *Detroit's Historic Eastern Market*, 9-28.

²⁷⁷ Some scholarly works which aided in my arguments about the gentrification occurring in Detroit and elsewhere, include: Lance Freeman's *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* (2006), Sharon Zukin's *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2009), Sulemein Osman's *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (2012), Dora Apel's *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (2015), Rebecca Kinney's *Beautiful Wasteland* (2016), Heather Ann Thompson's *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (2017), Brian Doucet's *Why Detroit Matters* (2017), P.E. Moskowitz's *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* (2017), and Marcus Hunter's *Chocolate Cities: The Black Map of American Life* (2018).

²⁷⁸ "Detroit Distillery," *Detroit Distillery*, last modified 2019, <http://www.detroitcitydistillery.com>.

working with Michigan farmers to craft luscious preserves and condiments since 2010.²⁷⁹

Originally, owners and founders Noelle Lothamer and Molly O'Meara established a very small business manufacturing their products out of their homes and marketing them strictly at Eastern Market.²⁸⁰ With the growth of their company, they have now renovated a much larger production space and added a storefront on the corner of Winder and Riopelle Streets.²⁸¹ After being forced to move from their historical downtown location, Henry the Hatter, has moved next door to Beau Bien Foods in order to remain "Detroit's exclusive Hatter since 1893!"²⁸² Nestled within the long closed E&B Brewery on Winder Street, Red Bull Arts Detroit is an artist residency, gallery, and creative space "focusing on creating new opportunities for artists and fostering public engagement in the arts."²⁸³ Across Orleans Street, "America's Oldest Corned Beef Specialist,"

²⁷⁹ In 2010, the Cottage Food Law was passed in Michigan. Under the Cottage Food Law, "non-potentially hazardous foods that do not require time and/or temperate control for safety can be produced in a home kitchen (the kitchen of the person's primary domestic residence) for direct sale to customers at farmers markets, farm markets, roadside stands, or other direct market." This law makes it possible for people thinking about starting a new business; yet, are reluctant or unable to afford commercial kitchen space. Likewise, this law provides an opportunity for new, small scale producers to test their products, as well as enables "farmers who sell produce at farmers markets and on-farm markets to expand their product lines to include things like baked goods and jams." Additionally, this law regulates the amount of annual income a producer can generate each year with a \$25,000 cap. "Michigan Cottage Foods Information," *michigan.gov*, last modified 2019, https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-50772_45851-240577--,00.html.

²⁸⁰ "Leave No Charcuterie Board Behind – Beau Bien Fine Foods," *Mitten Crate*, last modified 2014, <https://blog.mittencrate.com/leave-no-charcuterie-board-behind-beau-bien-fine-foods/>.

²⁸¹ Dan Carmody interview.

²⁸² "Our History," *Henry the Hatter*, last modified 2019, <https://www.henrythehatterdetroit.com/our-history>.

²⁸³ "About Us," *Red Bull Arts Detroit*, last modified 2019, <http://redbullarts.com/detroit/about/>.

E.W. Grobbel Sons is butted up to the Dequindre Cut Greenway.²⁸⁴ Established in 1883, this company specializes in processed meats. Likewise, Berry and Sons Islamic Slaughter located next door specializes in fresh halal-kosher meat which testifies to the diversity of the urban setting of Eastern Market.²⁸⁵

On the opposite side of the district, historical Germack Pistachio Company is still operating in its fourth generation of family ownership on the corner of Russell and Adelaide Streets. This company is the oldest roaster of pistachio nuts in the United States; yet, it began to roast other small batches of nuts, seeds, and coffees, as well as merchandise other gourmet gifts (chocolates, dried fruits, etc.).²⁸⁶ Near the center of the neighborhood, Farmers Restaurant is located at the corner of Adelaide and Market. Along with other neighborhood eateries, this restaurant serves breakfast and lunch fare to Eastern Market visitors with food which has been prepared from the farmers distributing their goods at the market.²⁸⁷ Just as all of these businesses have established a rich and historical community for farmers market shoppers, there are several large contemporary murals decorating the brick walls on buildings surrounding the market which

²⁸⁴ Opening in 2009, the Dequindre Cut Greenway is a two-mile urban recreational path which offers a pedestrian link between several Detroit residential neighborhoods, as well as Eastern Market, East Riverfront, and other popular downtown destinations. Formerly a railroad line, the Dequindre Cut is “A predominately below street-level greenway that runs parallel to St. Aubin Street, between Mack Avenue and Atwater Street.” Just north of the Detroit River. The greenway is “well-known for its examples of urban artwork and graffiti,” features a 20-foot wide paved path for both pedestrian and bicycle traffic. “Dequindre Cut,” *Detroit Riverfront Conservancy*, last modified 2019, <http://detroitriverfront.org/riverfront/dequindre-cut/dequindre-cut>.

²⁸⁵ “About,” *Berry & Sons Halal Meat*, last modified 2018, <http://berryandsonshalalmeat.com/about.php>.

²⁸⁶ “About Germack Pistachio Company,” *Germack*, last modified 2018, <https://www.germack.com/pages/about-us>.

²⁸⁷ Johnson and Thomas, *Detroit’s Eastern Market*, 19-20.

create a pleasant and inviting ambiance for visitors and the people distributing their goods in the market sheds (see Figures 5.8-5.13).²⁸⁸

Currently administered by the Eastern Market Corporation, attending the farmers market on Saturday is a tradition for thousands of people which sometimes goes back several familial generations.²⁸⁹ On these specific days, general public consumers have historically shopped under the sheds for fresh produce, manufactured goods, and prepared foods distributed by three types of producers: family farmers, wholesale dealers, and vendors. Usually, these producers rent stalls on an annual basis. However, they are also permitted to purchase a spot for daily use. As Pamela DeWeese explains in her dissertation “The Eastern Farmers’ Market: An Urban Ethnography,” these three types of producers have overlapping functionalities which typically align with the family farmer model outlined throughout this dissertation. By this I mean, both family farmers and wholesale producers grow their crops on a medium- to large-sized piece of property. Typically, they consider agricultural acts to be traditional affairs passed down through several generations of family members. Usually, they prefer the farmers market locale because it provides a space to have direct contact with their consumers. Whereas other family farmers tend

²⁸⁸ As some of the images included here show, murals in Eastern Market have been a tradition for decades. However, in 2014, Eastern Market Corporation began collaborating with 1xRUN (a Detroit based publisher of fine art prints and curator of original art) to producer more than 125 murals in the Eastern Market District. These mural paintings are designed by local, regional, and world-renowned artists to enhance the Eastern Market experience and transform the neighborhood into a “must-see destination for arts, as well as food, in Detroit.” “Murals in the Market,” *Murals in the Market*, last modified 2018, <https://www.muralsinthemarket.com/about/>.

²⁸⁹ The city of Detroit transferred the management and operation of the district of Eastern Market to a public-private partnership with Eastern Market Corporation in 2006. “Eastern Market Corporation Office,” *Eastern Market Corporation*, last modified 2019, <https://www.easternmarket.org/district/eastern-market-corporation-office>.



Figure 5.8 One of the longer standing murals painted on an exterior wall located in Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, summer 2017. This specific mural is located on the corner of Riopelle and Adelaide Streets. Photograph reproduced with permission by Jenny Armentrout.

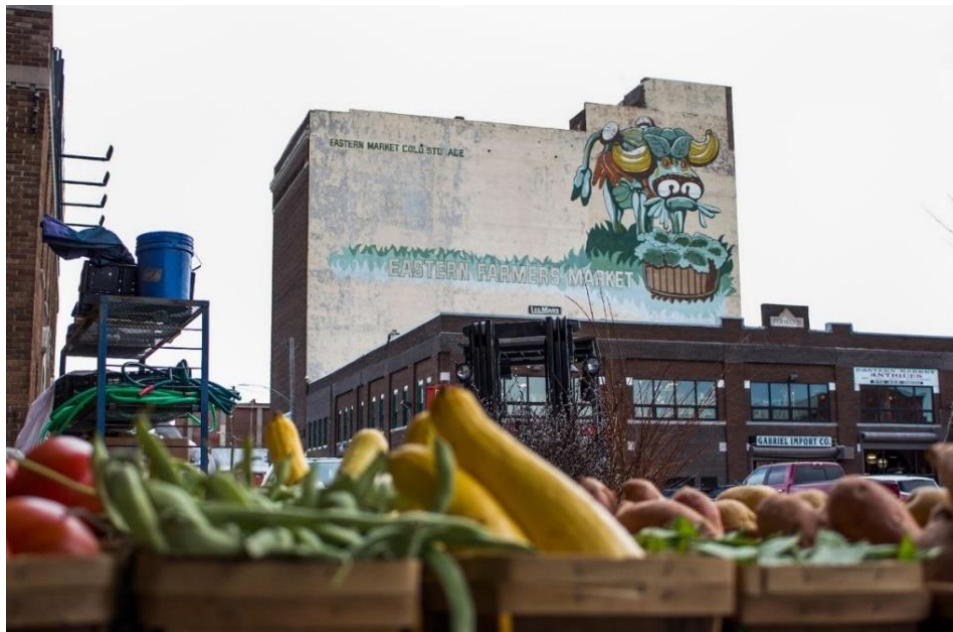


Figure 5.9 Another longstanding mural favorite on the exterior wall of Eastern Market Cold Storage in Detroit, Michigan, this painting has been recreated several times and can be viewed in historical market photos dating back to the 1960s. Photograph reproduced with permission by Samuel Morykwas.



Figure 5.10 A mural painted on an exterior wall located in Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, fall 2016. Painting by Hebru Brantley. Photograph reproduced with permission by Alan Cain.

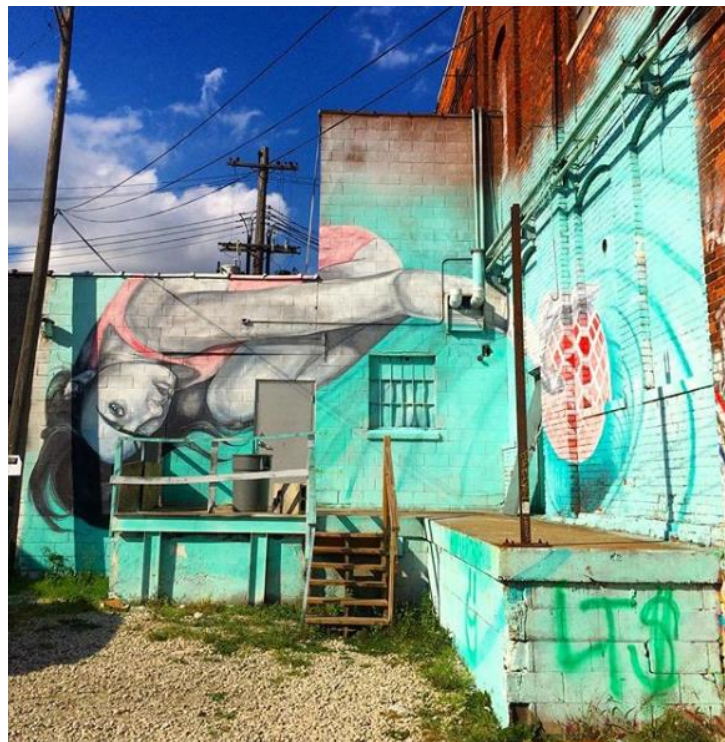


Figure 5.11 A mural painted on an exterior wall of an Eastern Market Corporation brewery in Detroit, Michigan, fall 2016. Painting by Michelle Tanguay. Photograph reproduced with permission by Alan Cain.



Figure 5.12 A mural painted on an exterior wall located in Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, fall 2016. Painting by Cey Adams. Photograph reproduced with permission by Alan Cain.



Figure 5.13 Most appropriately, “Nothing Stops Detroit” is a motto that many Detroiters have begun to embrace during the current times of economic struggle, fall 2016. This mural is painted on an exterior wall at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan. Photograph reproduced with permission by Alan Cain.

to invest in producing one crop annually, sometimes Eastern Market producers grow a diverse variety of crops in order to increase successful business practices. Additionally, these producers view the farmers market as an outlet which is: “(a) less demanding, (b) more dependable, (c) more profitable” than other types of farming endeavors which sell primarily to large-scale food handlers.²⁹⁰ Likewise, vendors tend to be individuals or businesses who sell small amounts of manufactured, processed, or prepared foodstuffs yet usually have a direct tie to other entities at the market such as farmers or wholesale dealers. Although it seems family farmers, vendors, and wholesale dealers are still the primary types of producers visible at Eastern Market in contemporary times, it appears that the hybridization of them has created a fourth category of distributor to consider – Young Farmers.

5.2 Young Farmers at Eastern Market and Beyond

Historically, Detroit has been referred to as the “Motor City” or “Motown” because of the influence both the automotive and music industries have had on its cultural growth. However, when the city filed bankruptcy in 2013, Detroit had already undergone a drastic decrease in population size and it continues to rapidly lose community members in what seems like a relatively short period of time – from 1.86 million in 1950 to just over 670,000 in 2017.²⁹¹ While earlier race related actions in the 1960s produced a surge of “white flight” away from the city into the suburbs, socio-economic struggles in more recent years resulted in a heightened amount

²⁹⁰ Pamela DeWeese, “The Eastern Farmers’ Market: An Urban Ethnography,” PhD diss., Purdue University, 1974, 85-88.

²⁹¹ This statistic is based on the most current census data information. As reported in several newspaper articles, such as: Katharine Seelye’s “Detroit Census Confirms a Desertion Like No Other” (2011), Kristi Tanner’s “Detroit Still Losing Population – but it could be a lot worse” (2018), and Scott Beyer’s “Why Has Detroit Continued to Decline?” (2018).

of abandoned buildings and sites of urban decay in these same areas. Moreover, Detroit's once thriving downtown area became extremely less inhabited after the large African-American population could no longer afford to live there, and the amount of empty space increased. Several factors led to this devastation including increasing unemployment percentages, a rise in crime rates, and heightened poverty levels. More specifically, with the decision to outsource many automotive production lines to other global locations, Detroit's automotive industry collapsed in the late 20th century resulting in a dramatic layoff of individuals working in Detroit's plants. Additionally, individuals who worked in other professions dependent on these workers were also affected. According to the most current report from the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Detroit's unemployment rate is at 8.4%, twice the national average at the time²⁹²

During this same time, urban development projects plunged downward and became uninhabitable. Housing and expansion properties went into foreclosure, creating a real estate spike for people with the financial ability to purchase cheap, fixer upper homes. According to reports in the early 2010s, Detroit properties sold for extremely small amounts of money.²⁹³

²⁹² "US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics," accessed January 6, 2019, https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm. Additional readings which aided in this argument are: Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (2005), Rebecca Solnit's "Detroit Arcadia: Exploring the post-American landscape" (2007), Amy Padnani's "Anatomy of Detroit's Decline" (2013), Charlie LeDuff's *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (2014), and Mark Binelli's *The Last Days of Detroit* (2014).

²⁹³ One report even states some residential property listings for as little as one dollar: Sonja Koremans "Homes Still Selling for \$1 in Detroit" (2013). Other readings to consider regarding Detroit's property foreclosure crisis are: Eric Seymour's dissertation "Foreclosure, Federal Financial Institutions, and the Fortunes of Detroit's Middle- and Working-Class Neighborhoods" (2016), Nathan Bomey's *Detroit Resurrected: To Bankruptcy and Back* (2016), Amy Haimel's *Detroit Hustle: A Memoir of Love, Life, & Home* (2016), and Drew Philp's *A \$500 House in Detroit: Rebuilding an Abandoned Home and an American City* (2017).

Other news sources reported how the City of Detroit began tearing down abandoned houses and building structures to lower crime, thereby making areas seem more desirable for its inhabitants. Additionally, the city gained the financial ability to tear down these structures after it filed bankruptcy and a federal mortgage rescue program took effect. Although there is a wide range of opinions on this subject, the city government chose to target specific neighborhoods to dismantle which helped to keep some residential areas intact and prevent fewer residents from fleeing Detroit. Currently, there are large expanses of open property where demolitions took place, some of which stretch several city blocks. Therefore, the amount of open space on abandoned city lots seemed profitable for Young Farmers interested in urban agriculture.²⁹⁴ Along with the potential space needed to plant a diverse variety of crops, the resurgence of people moving back into these downtown areas provided a customer base for which many Young Farmers were searching. Several Detroit locations, such as Corktown, North End, and Brush Park were at the forefront of this renaissance. Moreover, these specific locations have transcended from financially devastated neighborhoods into popular tourist destinations and residential areas with thriving restaurant and nightlife scenes.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ More information regarding the demolition of these areas can be gained by reading such sources as: John Gallagher's *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City* (2010), Michael Snyder's "The Mayor of Detroit's Radical Plan to Bulldoze One Quarter of the City" (2010), Joel Kurth's "Bulldoze Away: Some Detroit Neighborhoods Need Thinning Out" (2017), and Benjamin Raven's "City Will Tear Down 10K Abandoned Houses in 2 Years, Detroit Mayor Says" (2017), as well as visiting the website specifically designated for the Detroit Demolition Program at: <https://www.detroitmi.gov/departments/detroit-building-authority/detroit-demolition-program>.

²⁹⁵ Additionally, I've written more about this subject in other articles, such as: "Pastiching the Pastoral: The Gentrification and Commodification of Rural America" (in review with Routledge, 2019).

Organizations such as Keep Growing Detroit, Lafayette Greens, and the Michigan Urban Farming Initiative were founded in the early 2010s to promote and aid in ways for this new, growing population of young people to envision the changes and possibilities available in these spaces. All of these organizations are dedicated to providing Detroit's community members with opportunities of sustainable agriculture. More specifically, Keep Growing Detroit is "cultivating a food sovereign city where the majority of fruits and vegetables Detroiters consume are grown by residents within the city's limits."²⁹⁶ It provides Detroit's gardeners and farmers a space and the staff to sell their produce at Eastern Market. Lafayette Greens is a small, organic vegetable and fruit garden in the heart of Detroit. It was designed to provide green space among high-rise building structures, as well as promotes community engagement and sustainability.²⁹⁷ Lastly, the Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUFI) is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization which hopes to reduce the socioeconomic disparity occurring in Detroit's North End neighborhood by redeveloping a three-acre area positioned around a centrally-located urban farm. Additionally, they have acquired six-unit apartment facility and hope to "restore it into a Community Center with administrative, multi-purpose, and food processing space with an adjacent healthy food café."²⁹⁸ All the while, Detroit's current Young Farmer population remains interested in the rural aesthetics of historic American agriculture models and Eastern Market's centralized location

²⁹⁶ "Garden Resource Program, 2019." *Keep Growing Detroit*, last modified 2019, <http://detroitagriculture.net/>.

²⁹⁷ Beth Hagenbuch, "Lafayette Greens: An Urban Garden," October 20, 2011, <http://www.kw-la.com/kenweikal/2011/10/lafayette-greens-an-urban-garden/>.

²⁹⁸ "About," *The Michigan Urban Farming Initiative*, last modified 2013, <http://www.miufi.org/>.

provides a space where they can continue to develop a community and learn agricultural principles from other farmers.

5.2.1 *Brother Nature Produce*

Before beginning to farm in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood, Greg Willerer was a charter school teacher in a Detroit suburb. His parents grew up in Detroit; yet, fled to the suburb of West Bloomfield to raise their children in the early 1960s.²⁹⁹ About the location of his upbringing, Willerer insists:

Suburbia [is] the greatest misallocation of resources in the history of the world: big, thin-walled houses that take loads of gas and electricity to heat and cool, acres of farmland and animal habitat bulldozed for useless lawns that guzzle water and gobble poisons, barrels of food scraps hauled across the county and buried in a landfill, sprawling subdivisions requiring cars and gasoline for the simplest of errands – mailing a package or buying a gallon of milk...suburbs [encourage] isolation, [cultivate] a fear of strangers, and [create] enclaves that [segregate] the white middle class from poor people and brown people.³⁰⁰

With these ideas in mind, Willerer was determined to escape the lifestyle in which he was raised and began to protest it by relocating back to downtown Detroit in the late twentieth century.³⁰¹ Established in 2005, Willerer's farm now spreads out over a number of vacant city blocks (amounting to just over an acre) and is one of the longest standing chemical-free farms in the

²⁹⁹ Willerer's father and grandfather worked in the automobile industry in Ford's River Rouge plant. Jessica Leigh Hester, "Farming for Their Lives," *CityLab*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.citylab.com/life/2016/08/detroit-urban-farmers-growing/497027/>.

³⁰⁰ Mark Sundeen, "Can Farming Solve Detroit's Postindustrial Blues?," *VICE*, February 6, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/gvdyqm/urban-farming-the-future-detroit-v24n1.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* This was after he met Paul Weertz, a former Wayne State University professor, and his wife who purchased several, vacant homes in the neighborhood for relatively small amounts of money. The Weertz's rented out several of these properties, after tearing down the fences between them to create a backyard, common area, in which Weertz kept livestock and planted, mowed, and baled hay for the animals.

city.³⁰² Originally, Willerer continued teaching to supplement his agricultural endeavors. However, by the end of 2008, he realized his monthly expenses were minimal and quit the education profession to devote his time solely to food production.

Before moving to Detroit near the end of the Great Migration, Olivia Hubert's grandmother resided on a family-owned and operated farm in De Kalb, Mississippi. Although her parents decided to pursue other professions, I mention Hubert's grandmother here to establish how her roots lie in agriculture. She showed an interest in plants from a young age and pursued a degree in horticulture from Michigan State University, before receiving an internship at the Royal Horticultural Society in London. Eventually, she moved back to Detroit to find a position in the field and worked in the Belle Isle Conservatory greenhouse.³⁰³ She met her husband, Greg Willerer, in 2010 at Eastern Market, while they both volunteered at the "Grown in Detroit" booth selling produce for other local farmers (see Figure 5.14).³⁰⁴ Combining their efforts, their farm, Brother Nature Produce, specializes in growing salad mix and herbs to sell at Eastern Market, the Corktown Farmers Market, the Farmers' Hand (a small grocer in Corktown), and outside the Belle Isle Conservatory greenhouse, as well as several local restaurants.³⁰⁵ However, they also raise chickens and ducks, as well as keep bees at the farm's downtown

³⁰² Ruthie Abel, "Cultivating Corktown: Growers Nurture Detroit's Oldest Hood," *Garden Collage*, November 3, 2015, <https://gardencollage.com/change/sustainability/cultivating-corktown-how-growers-are-nurturing-detroits-oldest-hood/>.

³⁰³ Sundeen, *Unsettlers*, 129-230.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

³⁰⁵ "About," *Brother Nature Produce*, last modified 2017, <http://brothernatureproduce.com/about.html>.



Figure 5.14 Olivia Hubert and Greg Willerer pose on the front porch of their house located in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, spring 2014. Left vacant after Detroit's mass exodus in the late 20th century, their house now stands at the center of their farm. Photograph reproduced with permission by Olivia Hubert.

Detroit location. Additionally, the farm has an all-weather greenhouse in order to prolong the growing season during the harsh Michigan winters (see Figures 5.15-5.16).³⁰⁶ Furthermore, Brother Nature Produce was the first CSA program in the city of Detroit and serves as a model for other local CSA farm share programs.³⁰⁷

Food production at Brother Nature Produce is guided by three main principles. The first is to bring new, unusual products to consumers at various markets. Secondly, they solicit their locally grown products to resident consumers, in order to keep money within the Detroit area;

³⁰⁶ "Detroit: A Model of Urban Food Resilience," *Ixchel Rainbow Living*, last modified 2019, <https://8thnbee.com/detroit-a-model-of-urban-food-resilience/>.

³⁰⁷ Sundeen, *Unsettlers*, 215.



Figure 5.15 The clouds part over Brother Nature Produce, an urban farm located in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, summer 2017. Photograph reproduced with permission by Olivia Hubert.



Figure 5.16 Greg Willerer carries flats of plants through the greenhouse located at Brother Nature Produce farm, summer 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Olivia Hubert.

thereby, minimizing both parties carbon footprint. Lastly, Willerer and Hubert hope to increase their personal profitability in a city which embodies self-sufficiency even in times of struggle.³⁰⁸ In addition to these principles, Willerer and Hubert use “coffee grounds and other biodegradable waste from local restaurants to add to the compost piles that are scattered around [the farm]” in order to promote sustainable methods of agriculture.³⁰⁹ After Hubert joined the operation, the approach to planting became much less guerrilla style (seeds had been haphazardly strewn across the farm) and much more planned. Currently, trellises are used to maximize growing efforts, crops are planted in neat rows to yield an exceptional product, and weeds are pulled on schedule.³¹⁰ All of these styles indicate methods of controlled practice, similar to those which other farmer/farming models practice generating the best and highest quality product. On average, Brother Nature Produce sells “200 pounds of salad greens each weekend at Eastern Market...an 8-oz. bag of [salad] greens [is generally priced at] \$5” (see Figure 5.17).³¹¹ As shown in the figure, the Brother Nature Produce stall at Eastern Market cherishes a distinct aesthetic. The inviting banner which hangs above their booth, replaces letters from the farms name with vegetables representative to those grown at the location and proudly establishes the location of the farm in nearby Corktown. Instead of dry-erase boards like those of nearby tables, their wares are listed on chalkboards encompassed with vintage frames. They imagine their

³⁰⁸ Abel, “Cultivating Corktown.”

³⁰⁹ Marti Benedetti, “Growing Pains: Detroit Plots Course on Land Use as Leader in Urban Farming,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, August 6, 2016, <https://www.craindetroit.com/article/20160806/NEWS/160809907/detroit-plots-course-on-land-use-as-leader-in-urban-farming>.

³¹⁰ Sundeen, *Unsettlers*, 215.

³¹¹ Hester, “Farming for Their Lives.”



Figure 5.17 Olivia Hubert and Greg Willerer pose at the Brother Nature Produce booth at Eastern Market, spring 2015. The urban farm primarily produces chemical-free salad greens which are grown mere miles away in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan. Photograph reproduced with permission by Olivia Hubert.

operation as a creative endeavor and strive to demonstrate these efforts throughout the entire process, from the act of growing products dissimilar to other farms in the area through its presentation at the market.³¹² However, Willerer and Hubert see the farmers market not only as a place to showcase, distribute, and sell their produce grown mere miles away; but, also as a space to enrich connections with other regional farmers, share stories and lessons about their representative learning experiences, and teach other consumers and producers about their personal resiliency in contrast to other community members who have surrendered to the collapse of Detroit's economy and moved away. Moreover, their farming endeavors have opened opportunities for them in a city which has been devastated by urban blight.

5.2.2 ACRE

In very close proximity to Brother Nature Produce, ACRE farm resides in the same neighborhood of Corktown, amidst the shadows of Detroit's downtown skyscrapers. The ACRE farm proprietors, Ryan Anderson and Hannah Clark (see Figure 5.18), have not resided in the Detroit area for long, nor did they grow up in farming communities. Originally meeting in the Washington, D.C. area, Anderson and Clark left their jobs in the politically-minded, non-profit sector and chose to move to Detroit in 2011. This decision was made after they visited Detroit and witnessed the urban agricultural scene taking shape in the dilapidated city. While Clark spent a farm season learning agricultural methods in Illinois, Anderson apprenticed under Greg

³¹² Sundeen, *Unsettlers*, 216.



Figure 5.18 Young Farmers, Ryan Anderson and Hannah Clark at their farm, ACRE, located in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, summer 2017. Photograph reproduced with permission by Ryan Anderson.

Willerer at Brother Nature Produce to better understand the customer base of Detroit and learn some of the basics of farming.³¹³

ACRE is a “sustainable, urban farm helping Detroiters eat healthy, local food by providing the highest quality, rare, and heirloom produce possible.”³¹⁴ The for-profit farm

³¹³ Amy Haimerl, “North Corktown CSA Will Be Next Best Thing to Backyard Garden This Summer,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, April 21, 2014, <http://www.craigslistdetroit.com/article/20140421/BLOG017/140429978/north-corktown-csa-will-be-next-best-thing-to-backyard-garden-this>.

³¹⁴ “About Steward,” *Steward*, last modified 2019, <https://farmer.gosteward.com/inquiry/>.

operation is quite small and produces about twenty rows of an ample, variety of produce, using a small tractor to till their soil and a hoop house which extends their growing season (see Figure 5.19). Although they have been hesitant about joining other local farmers at the “Grown in Detroit” booth at Eastern Market, they have been instrumental in spearheading the Corktown Farmers Market. A portion of their income comes from distributing a large number of CSA shares to local residents, which has consequently further ignited attention given to the urban farm movement occurring in Detroit. However, they also sell their products to a few of the high-end restaurants in Detroit (see Figure 5.20).³¹⁵ As viewed in the figure, ACRE specializes in heirloom and rare varieties of common garden vegetables (i.e. tomatoes, swiss chard, basil, etc.), which have a distinct aesthetic tied to their vibrant presentation. Along with the nostalgic material culture artifacts (i.e. wicker baskets, chalkboard signs, etc.) they use to attract customers to their products, I argue the colorful varieties of vegetables which they produce prove to be more enticing to their consumer base and harkens back to a time when the city was more profitable, prosperous, and worthy of preserving.

Considering how Young Farmers attempt to portray nonconformity in various ways, what I think is most interesting about Anderson and Clark’s urban farm operation though is the different ways in which they network with their consumers, other Detroit agriculture operations, and the larger Young Farmer community. In 2017, ACRE became the first agricultural project funded by Steward, the world’s first “crowdfarming” platform. Similar to other investment programs, Steward enables “small-to-mid size sustainable farmers to raise financing online

³¹⁵ Paige Pfleger, “Detroit’s Urban Farms: Engines of Growth Omens of Change,” *Michigan Radio: NPR*, January 16, 2018, <http://www.michiganradio.org/post/detroit-s-urban-farms-engines-growth-omens-change>.



Figure 5.19 With vacant lots and burnt-out brick buildings in the distance, manicured rows of produce and a high-tunnel filled with heirloom tomatoes grow at ACRE farm in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, summer 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Ryan Anderson.

through crowdfunding.”³¹⁶ Additionally, ACRE makes a conscious choice to not participate in Eastern Market (the area’s largest, local food market destination) and have created alternative farmers markets which are “accessible to the smaller local growers who might not have the time and money to sell elsewhere.”³¹⁷ What I infer from these choices is that the vendor fees at

³¹⁶ “About Steward.”

³¹⁷ Kristen Jordan Shamus, “Fresh Produce Returns to Corktown,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 19, 2015, <https://www.freep.com/story/life/food/2015/05/19/farmers-market-comes-corktown/27600609/>.



Figure 5.20 ACRE's table of produce available for sale at the Corktown Farmer's Market, located in the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, summer 2012. Other than the heirloom tomatoes, swiss chard, and basil varieties in the photograph, the farm produces other types of herbs like shiso, mint, sage, and lavender, as well as salad turnips, carrots, beets, cucumbers, scallions, and eggplant used at local restaurants and for personal use. Photograph reproduced with permission by Ryan Anderson.

Eastern Market (\$560 per 18-week season) are still too high for substantially smaller farmers to be able to afford. Likewise, it seems that it may be difficult to become a vendor at Eastern Market because there is only a certain number of market stalls available from which to distribute their goods. Currently, the Eastern Market Corporation's website states that it is not accepting any new vendors at this time because of this limited space.³¹⁸ So, it seems that the farmers who distribute their goods at Eastern Market have monopolized the space and the drastic influx of Young Farmers in the Detroit area have had to seek opportunities elsewhere; thereby, launching other farmers market locations (i.e. Corktown Farmer's Market, Hamtramck Farmer's Market, etc.) in which to capitalize on their urban farming endeavors and local food scene. However, the farmers at ACRE still share common connections with other more established urban farmers in the city (like those at Eastern Market) and I contend this could be due to shared political goals and promoting social justice activism for the remaining neighborhood occupants who stayed during Detroit's downfall.

5.2.3 *Food Field – Detroit*

Working in the same social activism vein as other Young Farmers in Detroit, the primary goal of Noah Link and Alex Bryan's (see Figure 5.21) farm is "to join in the revitalization of Detroit by developing a successful, community-based business and to meet the need for local, affordable, sustainably produced food [there]."³¹⁹ Growing up in Laingsburg, a small agricultural community near the state capital of Lansing, Michigan, these Young Farmers graduated from the

³¹⁸ "Become a Vendor," *Eastern Market Corporation*, last modified 2019, <https://www.easternmarket.org/markets/become-a-vendor>.

³¹⁹ "About Us," *Food Field – Detroit*, last modified 2019, <https://www.foodfielddetroit.com/about-us/>.



Figure 5.21 Noah Link (left) and Alex Bryan (right) pose for a photograph while working on their urban farm, Food Field, near downtown Detroit, Michigan, summer 2018. Photograph reproduced with permission by Noah Link.

University of Michigan and afterwards began working on various farms in Michigan, Colorado, New Hampshire, and abroad.³²⁰ They founded Peck Produce, LLC in 2011 and their farm, Food Field (see Figure 5.22), sits on the old site of Peck Elementary school located in the Boston-

³²⁰ In addition to managing their farm's production, Noah Link and Alex Bryan are connected with several other local, regional, and global food justice and farm security organizations. More specifically, after several years managing food security programs for the Greater Lansing Food Bank in Lansing, Michigan, Bryan now spends some of his time working off the farm as the Sustainable Food Program Manager at the University of Michigan and is an active member of the National Young Farmers Coalition and Michigan Food & Farming Systems. Additionally, because their time is spent participating in these other ventures, Food Field has a seasonal farm manager responsible for the CSA program and other markets who



Figure 5.22 Organized rows of produce grow at Food Field in Detroit, Michigan, summer 2013. The farm is just over four acres; yet, produces a vast amount of local food for nearby residents. Photograph reproduced with permission by Noah Link.

Edison neighborhood near Detroit’s North End district.³²¹ It is described as “an urban farm and orchard on four acres in central Detroit. Since 2011, [Link and Bryan] have worked to build a sustainable business growing fruits and vegetables, eggs, honey, fish and more, while reducing waste and restoring soils.”³²² Moreover, their “priority is to produce fresh, healthy, and delicious

work closely with Link and Bryan to design plans for their Food Field’s production purposes. “About Us,” *Food Field – Detroit*, <https://www.foodfielddetroit.com/about-us/>.

³²¹ This land was purchased through the Michigan Land Fast Track Authority, “a state-operated clearinghouse for tax-reverted public property.” Nina Ignacak, “Food Field Urban Farm in Detroit Heals Land, Sets Sights on Aquaponics and Economic Viability,” *Seedstock*, April 1, 2013, <http://seedstock.com/2013/04/01/food-field-urban-farm-in-detroit-heals-land-sets-sights-on-aquaponics-and-economic-viability/>.

³²² “Vendors,” *Corktown Farmers Market*, last modified 2019, <http://www.corktownfarmersmarket.com/vendors/>.

food while improving the neighborhood and creating economic opportunities” for themselves and the people of Detroit.³²³

Rather than starting out small and expanding like other Detroit urban farms, Food Field cultivated as much land as it could to maximize profits, create opportunities, and generate the largest variety of products. Primarily, these Young Farmers concentrate on growing lettuce, spinach, greens, pumpkin, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and onions (see Figure 5.23-5.24). However, they’ve also planted over one hundred fruit and nut trees on the property, started caring for an assortment of poultry (chickens, ducks, and a few peacocks) mostly for the egg production value, built a farm apiary for pollination purposes and so they could distribute honey to their consumers, as well as received a grant for an aquaponics tank to be constructed within the farm’s greenhouse to begin raising bluegill and catfish.³²⁴

I argue that the vast diversity of these products points towards how these Young Farmers understand the needs of their community and that by promoting the multiplicity of their farm it ensures security for them and other residents in the neighborhood. Furthermore, they believe community involvement with their farm helps preserve the original sociability of the area. Moreover, they invite community members to participate in events occurring on site such as farm dinners, yoga sessions, and harvest parties similar to events which would have occurred during a different era when the city was busy with autoworker family activities (i.e. backyard barbeques, block parties, church fairs, etc.). Additionally, local residents willing to help out with

³²³ “About Us,” *Food Field – Detroit*,

³²⁴ Russ White, “Detroit’s ‘Food Field’ Brings Hope to Urban Agriculture Developments,” *mlive.com*, September 20, 2012, https://www.mlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2012/09/detroits_food_field_brings_hop.html.

Food Field's daily farm chore tasks gain the ability to take home any produce not sold at local farmers markets (i.e. Eastern Market, Hamtramck Farmer's Market, Corktown Farmer's Market, etc.), through their shared cooperative CSA share program, or to area restaurants.³²⁵

Along with these concepts of community building, the Young Farmers at Food Field began participating in WWOOFing after experiencing it for themselves during their personal travels. As I've written elsewhere:

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farmers, otherwise known as Willing Workers on Organic Farms, and possibly better known using the acronym WWOOF is a program set up across the world connecting organic farms with people who want to participate in a farming experience... This networking system depends on farm tourism and the appeal of rural destinations to create ethical, sustainable, authentic experiences for non-farmers. WWOOFers pay a membership fee online to have the ability to join the network and thusly, find a host farm in countries across the globe. When arriving at the host farm, the WWOOFing volunteer is given room and board in exchange for hours worked on the organic farm.³²⁶

For these purposes, Food Field has a tiny house structure built on the farm to house participating members and other guests visiting the farm (see Figure 5.25).³²⁷ Not only is the WWOOFing system powerful in aiding with the construction of the Young Farmer identity, but it is also beneficial when distributing the message of global green initiatives so representative of these Young Farmers. With these sustainability measures in mind, I contend that it is also noteworthy

³²⁵ Ruthie Abel, "Soil Survivor: Talking with Noah Link, Founder of Detroit's Food Field," *Garden Collage*, October 5, 2015, <https://gardencollage.com/wander/gardens-parks/soil-survivor-talking-with-noah-link-founder-of-detroits-food-field/>.

³²⁶ I've written about WWOOFing previously in "Pasticheing the Pastoral: The Gentrification and Commodification of Rural America." (in review with Routledge, 2019).

³²⁷ The tiny house structure is also listed for availability on Airbnb, a global, hospitality sharing service made available in 2008 in order to provide travelers with a more "local, authentic, diverse, inclusive, and sustainable" option of short-term accommodations. "About Us," *Airbnb*, last modified 2019, <https://press.airbnb.com/about-us/>.



Figure 5.25 Converted from a shipping container, a tiny house structure is situated amongst the row crops at Food Field farm, near downtown Detroit, Michigan, fall 2013. There are several solar power panels visible on the roof of the building. Photograph Reproduced with permission by Noah Link.

to point out here that the Young Farmers at Food Field advocate for alternative energy sources and most of the power structure at the farm is generated from an off-grid solar power energy system located on site. By using these alternative methods of production, growing food shares, and hosting additional agricultural experiences, Food Field forges connections with members of their neighborhood and a broader network of people similar to those developed historically in rural farm communities. Likewise, they reinforce the narrative shifts occurring in America's agricultural system by stimulating Detroit's economy with alternative forms of advancement in an urban environment.

5.2.4 Maple Creek Farm

Before moving away from the city, Danny Lutz (see Figure 5.26) was a restaurant and bar owner near downtown Detroit. At the time, the only experience he had growing vegetables was a backyard container garden. Now, he owns and operates Maple Creek Farm (see Figure 5.27), an eighty-acre, organic vegetable farm located one and a half hours north of Detroit in the rural community of Brockway Township, Michigan.³²⁸ In its first season, Maple Creek Farm's CSA program distributed produce to only 13 families. Currently, there are more than 300 families each season who participate in the CSA operation and consume the food produced on the farm.³²⁹ Other than in the field or dispensing boxes to CSA members, Lutz can usually be found at the farm's Eastern Market booth every Saturday where he sells a large variety of produce,

³²⁸ MapleCreekFarmCSA, "Starting Maple Creek Farm," YouTube Video, 7:29, January 18, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_QkmG95bJ0.

³²⁹ Danny Lutz, interview with author, November 5, 2018.



Figure 5.26 Danny Lutz (wearing a yellow shirt, wide brimmed hat, and sunglasses) of Maple Creek Farm in Brockway Township, Michigan speaks with a group of farm visitors. One of the seasonal farm events that Lutz holds includes a tour in which CSA members and other farm supporters can visit the farm to see where and how their food is being produced. Photograph reproduced with permission by Danny Lutz.



Figure 5.27 A field of produce growing at Maple Creek Farm in Brockway Township, Michigan, fall 2013. Although the field appears to be overgrown compared to other methods of farming, this farm adheres to organic agriculture methods and does not spray to alleviate the weed growth by Danny Lutz. Photograph reproduced with permission

such as: sweet corn, cantaloupe, brussels sprouts, fennel, peas, cabbage, lettuce mixes, tomatoes, onions, peppers, potatoes, green beans, kale, collard greens, zucchini, okra, dill, basil, broccoli eggplants, asparagus, garlic, beets, bok choy, cilantro, watermelon, raspberries, carrots, cauliflower, pumpkins, and squashes. Additionally, he sells assortments of transplants to market customers, so they can begin growing their own produce at home (see Figures 5.28-5.29).³³⁰

For the first ten years of Maple Creek Farms inception, Danny Lutz planted produce using “an Earthway hand-walking seeder, two stakes, and twine.”³³¹ However, the daily operation of Maple Creek Farm has changed drastically. Over time, the farm has become more mechanized and a tractor is now in use on the property. Lutz employs at least two families with Latino heritage to assist him on the farm. He states, “they’re skilled laborers” and he believes they give immense value to the farm by providing it additional manpower.³³² With their help, vegetable production has increased steadily over time. Additionally, they help Lutz tap the numerous maple trees on the farm in order to collect sap and make maple syrup, as well as keep bees on the property for honey production. Modeled after the CSA program, Lutz anticipates beginning a “Farm Box program” in which farmers market customers will pay a one-time, flat fee in order to choose their own entire box of produce. Basically, I understood this to mean, Maple Creek Farm consumers would be receiving a greater quantity of produce at a lower,

³³⁰ “Maple Creek Farm,” *greenmichigan.org*, last modified 2014, <http://www.greenmichigan.org/farm/maple-creek-farm/>.

³³¹ MapleCreekFarmCSA, “Starting Maple Creek Farm.”

³³² Ibid.



Figure 5.28 A table of produce available at the Maple Creek Farm stall at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, fall 2013. Photograph reproduced with permission by Danny Lutz.

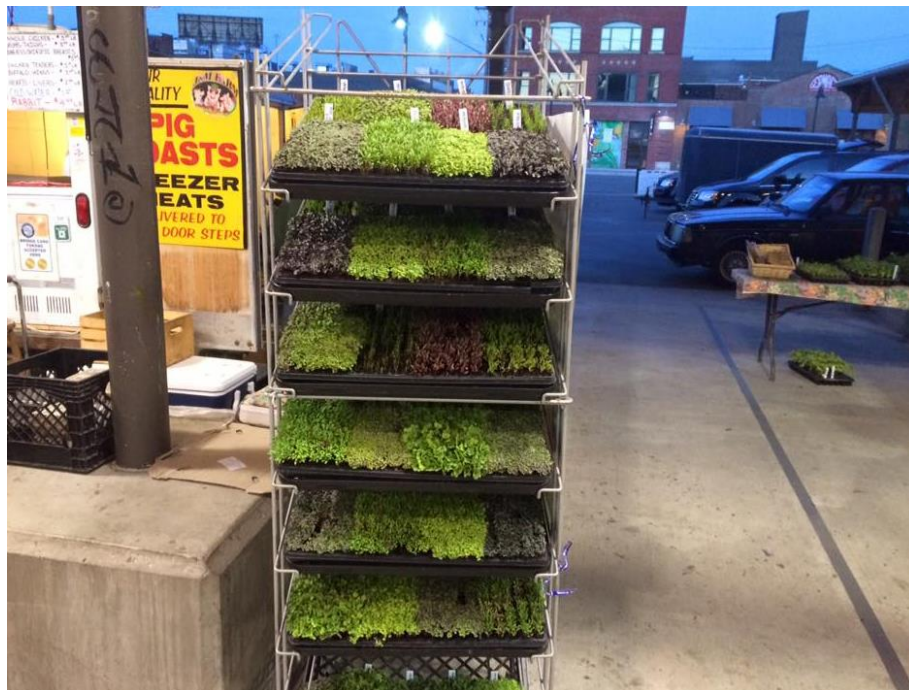


Figure 5.29 A shelf filled with transplants available for consumers to purchase from Maple Creek Farm at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan, summer 2015. Photograph reproduced with permission by Danny Lutz.

bargain price. Ultimately, he practices all of these methods as an attempt to open up his marketing repertoire and sustain his farm, in order to propel it into the next agricultural era.³³³

Even after some of these drastic adaptations, Danny Lutz has not altered his passionate convictions about why he initially joined the local agriculture movement. More specifically, this Young Farmer is boisterous when discussing political, environmental, and health concerns involving the current state of American food production, as well as how and where it is produced.³³⁴ He practices organic, non-genetically modified, sustainable agricultural principles on his farm because he believes growing food for his community is a way of teaching people alternatives to the negative effects of the industrial ways of large, corporate farms. Moreover, he insinuates that farms who approach growing food from these perspectives are “dependent on the big oil companies” and thereby, linked to much larger issues connected to the global food industry and health concerns, such as diseases including cancer, diabetes, etc.³³⁵ By growing

³³³ Danny Lutz interview, 2018. At the time of my interview with him, Lutz mentioned how he was struggling to keep his farm afloat after some hard times personally. In a more recent Facebook post dated January 2, 2019, he writes: “still in the air on if I’ll continue farming vegetables this year. If you know someone who is offering anything you’re interested in. please don’t wait on me...support them!!!! I’ll know more on my situation...soon. Of course my passion never waivers!!! It seems that every year less people care about Organic farmers.” On January 3, 2019, he mentions planting marijuana as a method of farm sustainability. Additionally, a gofundme page has been created in order to support Maple Creek Farm and states: “Funds are desperately needed to keep the farm open and moving forward. Government loans are coming due and if not paid, farm equipment goes to auction. Ultimately, shutting the farm down.” <https://www.gofundme.com/save-maple-creek-organic-farm>.

³³⁴ On November 5, 2018 (the date of my most recent phone conversation with Danny Lutz), it just so happened to be the day before the most recent election in Michigan. After initially confusing each other for local pollsters, our conversation changed to the sociopolitical climate surrounding the American agricultural industry with considerable reference to how it has changed the food system in a variety of ways.

³³⁵ Anton Simper, “The Healing Revolution Film Excerpt Featuring Maple Creek Farms,” YouTube Video, 4:00, March 14, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obaCjfBxLe4>.

fruits and vegetables on Maple Creek Farm, Lutz recognizes that he has personal autonomy over some food conglomerates such as Monsanto, Cargill, and Dow Chemical; yet, he also gains the ability to provide a much larger community with fresh alternatives to store bought food (which is generally more easily accessible and shelf safe).³³⁶

Considered influential figures, Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin have written about specific ideologies which describe motivational factors for how farmers are imagining changes in the agricultural industry, thereby creating alternatives for consumers and how food production could be considered differently in America.³³⁷ More specifically, they argue that if more people were

³³⁶ MapleCreekFarmCSA, “Video 010: Danny Talks Risk – Maple Creek Farm,” YouTube Video, 7:42, April 26, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDA1kqEXJi4> One of the major tenets of Eastern Market is that they’re creating an environment in which to make the people of Detroit “healthier, wealthier, and happier.” This is especially prominent after the city underwent drastic changes related to racial adversity and the health concerns raised amongst those marginalized communities, such as the creation of food deserts, health concerns, and rising poverty rates. Put differently, Dan Carmody (2018) explains that Eastern Market, and the farmers who distribute their food there, both play central roles in creating wealth for the city of Detroit, while also creating a space for community members to improve their physical health and “come together across lines that often separate” them. There is a much larger body of literature tied to the topics of food and health. Some of the scholarly works I considered when developing this argument are, Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001), Marion Nestle’s *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (2002), Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) and *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (2008), Mark Winne’s *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty* (2008), Marie-Monique Robin’s *The World According to Monsanto* (2008), Barry Estabrook’s *Tomatoland: From Harvest of Shame to Harvest of Hope* (2011), Michael Moss’s *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (2013), Dan Barber’s *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food* (2015), and Pamela Ronald and Raoul Adamchak’s *Tomorrow’s Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food* (2018).

³³⁷ I’ve discussed some of Wendell Berry’s writings in previous chapters. However, Joel Salatin is a contemporary American farmer, lecturer, and activist who practices holistic methods of agricultural management at Polyface Farm near the rural town of Swoope, Virginia. His farm produces “environmentally responsible, ecologically beneficial, sustainable” livestock in order to maximize production and innovate the farm. Moreover, several of Salatin’s books have informed readers on the alternative methods practiced on the farm, such as *Folks! This Ain’t Normal: A Farmer’s Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World* (2012). Along with these highly distinguished farmers, Danny Lutz referenced John Peterson as an influential model

concerned with issues of sustainability connected to the nation's food supply and creating a greater amount of farming communities then, maybe problems pertaining to these issues could be alleviated. Conceivably then, most of what Danny Lutz spoke with me about reminds me of these scholarly voices. More specifically, regarding the hard work required on the farm and having personally responsibility for one's own food supply, Lutz states:

Everybody should grow something and [then, it] would give [them] greater appreciation for how difficult it is [to grow] and more respect for [their] food supply and [they] might even like it. I think everybody should try to grow something. When I was living in Detroit, it was people like [the Latino population, who] were putting the food out there [and which] eventually made it to the supper table. And, I'll tell you for a fact, that if American's had to depend on Americans to go out and harvest, most Americans couldn't [actually] pick their own lunch.³³⁸

Tying these ideas back with other Young Farmers in Detroit and who sell their goods at Eastern Market, I would argue that all of them are concerned about the value of supplying food for their neighbors who are unable to generate it for themselves. They hold special value in areas where fresh food is harder to come by and their insurgence in the city of Detroit has been beneficial for them personally, but also for the community members who still reside in those neighborhoods.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that for more than a century Eastern Market has acted as a community epicenter for people producing food near the Detroit, Michigan area. More specifically, family farmers, vendors, wholesalers, and more recently, Young Farmers use Detroit's public market location to meet other farmers who share similar ideologies and to form

for the agricultural methods he uses on Maple Creek Farm. John Peterson is an Illinois farmer portrayed in the documentary *The Real Dirt on Farmer John* (2005) who revolutionizes the way his family farm is viewed in a rural Midwestern community by participating in non-conformity (i.e. wearing eccentric clothing such as feather boas, Dr. Seuss hats, and glittery scarves) while performing agricultural tasks. Moreover, his unique method of farming creates a way for his particular farm to rise out of the state of depression of which other regional farms have fallen victim.

³³⁸ MapleCreekFarmCSA, "Danny Talks Risk."

bonds. Additionally, they use Eastern Market as a space to meet consumers who are interested in purchasing their products. However, just as the streets in the city of Detroit are configured like the spokes of a wheel, Young Farmers have developed their community in the same design. Within the city of Detroit, they do not rely solely on the hub of the market to distribute their produce. Many have begun to branch out and diversify their marketing techniques and depend more on the alternative methods to generate profits. Ultimately, there is a social movement occurring in Detroit after the most recent economic recession and the city is rehabilitating zones based off the tenets of Young Farmers who are pioneering landscapes transformed by cultural and socioeconomic shifts occurring in the city. These Young Farmers mimic their community building skills off of other farmer and farming models especially after witnessing them at Eastern Market and in other more rural areas. Moreover, Young Farmers in Detroit are combining attributes of rural American farmers with urban ingenuity in order to fight against food politics and social justice issues locally, regionally, and nationally.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

On the cover of the February 2015 issue of *Acre's U.S.A.*, a young woman harvests a luscious bunch of beets by hand. She smiles a perfectly orthodontics-fixed straight-toothed grin, while donning her backwards trucker hat. Hiding her eyes is a pair of over-sized aviator glasses. Her cut-off sleeve t-shirt displays her upper-arm owl tattoo.³³⁹ Similarly, in a featured article from the Urban Exodus website, a twenty-something man and woman stand with their arms around each other in the middle of a vibrant green field on a farm located in rural Vermont. Surrounded by a grass-fed herd of well-manicured goats, the pair poses to have their photograph taken. Both of them wear colorful, flannel-plaid shirts, mixed-patterned shorts, and brown rubber boots. In the background, a tidy barn is painted a shade of red reminiscent of similar structures across the countryside.³⁴⁰ Recently, farming publications that present “pastoral hip” images and narratives such as these have become more popular. Yet, they preserve the myth that agricultural processes can be easily duplicated by anyone. When presented with images such as those described above, it seems that individuals who have limited farming experience are beginning to pioneer landscapes with which they have previously been unfamiliar in order to commodify agricultural lifestyle and affect change in rural, farming communities.³⁴¹ Operating at the intersection of rural studies, farm studies, food studies, and material culture studies, this project has expressed multiple ways Young Farmers have clung to behaviors they have adopted from

³³⁹ *Acre's U.S.A.*, February 2015.

³⁴⁰ “Louisa and Luke,” *Urban Exodus*, last modified 2019.
<https://www.urbanexodus.com/louisa-luke>.

³⁴¹ I’ve used these examples previously in “Pastiche the Pastoral: The Gentrification and Commodification of Rural America.” (in review with Routledge, 2019).

past farmer representations and begun to restructure the American agricultural system by highlighting the importance of the farmers market space on those communities. By recognizing their presence at three farmers markets in Michigan, this dissertation acknowledges the social, cultural, environmental, political, and economic framework alterations Young Farmers have brought to rural landscapes and communities, as well as points towards how these shifts have advanced the American agricultural industry after tumultuous times, such as the 1980s Farm Crisis, the Great Recession of 2008. More currently, Young Farmers characterize a positive image of the farming industry amid the uncertainty presented by the Trump administration.

Throughout this dissertation, I have established how American farmers have historically been identified as white, middle-aged, working- to middle-class, men who reside in rural environments to grow large expanses of corn, soybeans, wheat, and other grains. However, I have argued this fraught representation of a farmer has become an antiquated representation of people participating in American agriculture and therefore, brings attention to other marginalized farming individuals, groups, and communities in a variety of ways. First, my primary focus on Young Farmers – mostly white, middle-class, millennials – aids with redefining agricultural communities by them romanticizing mundane artifacts associated with past representations of farmers and farming. Subsequently, these individuals are altering the spaces and places usually associated with American agriculture by adopting techniques and customs of established agricultural communities in order to promote cultural longevity and environmental sustainability. Usually, Young Farmers hold small parcels of land, produce a diverse assortment of crops which do not fit within larger agribusiness farming models, and typically do not identify as farmers until they have participated in agricultural endeavors for a varied amount of time. Likewise, sometimes they are initially unaware of what draws them to the material artifacts associated with

rural America and farming culture; yet, they tend to use more romanticized versions of sustainable farming practices reminiscent of those used during times of lessened mechanization to focus on generating superior products for their consumers. Ultimately, they use these methods to establish themselves at alternative market venues to make connections with local community members thereby generating a well-earned profit in a profession controlled by governmental regulation, which tends to reward larger farm models instead of creating opportunities for small-scale operations.

After the Great Recession of 2008, Young Farmers have relocated to rural, agrarian neighborhoods which are in economic decline to establish communities which are structured on principles of lifestyle sustainability. Their migration is a reaction to the modern – accomplished by seeking out “the simple life” on the farm – as well as a revolt against industrial failure occurring in metropolitan areas. Their existence challenges the relationship between the urban and the rural and puts into question what personal traits have been historically represented by some rural residents in the agricultural profession (i.e. aging, lower socio-economic class, white men without a college education).³⁴² Likewise, Young Farmers understand their lifestyles and their existences are dependent upon interactions with their local environments and communities. Many of the Young Farmers I spoke with believe that historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors have caused the issues surrounding climate change and other existing environmental concerns. Therefore, they participate in agriculture as a method of protest and hope to alter this negative progression in order to see the natural environment flourish well into the twenty-first century.

³⁴² Ibid.

By exploring multiple representations of American farmers, this dissertation critically analyzes several characterizations of individuals associated with rural landscapes by reinforcing their engagement in farming communities. Through the examination of various forms of print and digital media (i.e. archival photographs, social media representations, contemporary agrarian magazines, and agricultural lifestyle websites), I have suggested that representations of Young Farmers typically align with those stereotypical of American farmer images and reinforce the importance of rural nostalgia. Furthermore, I have revealed how subgroups of Young Farmers are prospering in several Michigan farmers market locations by pastiching identifying attributes of their nearby family and corporate farmer model neighbors, thereby creating sites of rural gentrification.³⁴³ Put simply, while adopting characteristics of established farmers and commodifying aspects of their lifestyle, Young Farmers blur the lines between urban and rural landscapes and create spaces for producers and consumers to meet in their own community.³⁴⁴

By studying and understanding how the people and places who make up farmers and farming spaces in a representative locale like Michigan are codependent, I recognize that American food production and consumption patterns are also fluctuating to incorporate a national infatuation with fresh, local, organic produce. More specifically, Young Farmers in Traverse City, Midland, and Detroit, Michigan are the faces representative of local food practices which are on trend with other gentrified American settings. Moreover, these Young Farmers are producing a more diverse variety of crops than other regional farming models. Additionally, they

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

market their high-end products for much smaller foodshed distribution purposes.³⁴⁵ Due to these factors, Young Farmers sometimes create limitations for area consumers because of affordability. By this I mean, the artisanal quality and specialized nature of some products create conflict in some locations because of perceptions of power, privilege, and difference. Although many Young Farmers are attempting to alter the American agriculture industry by providing food for their local communities, sometimes the price-points they distribute them at create a supplemental version of marginalization. Furthermore, by forming cultural bonds with “authentic” agricultural representations, Young Farmers have proved that they socially construct their identities in a variety of ways. First, they adopt moral tendencies similar to those used in Thomas Jefferson’s model of Agrarians, such as valuing rural society and culture norms and their independent lifestyle, practicing self-sufficiency techniques, and promoting environmental sustainability.³⁴⁶ Secondly, they generate more food diversity which conflicts with Earl Butz’s

³⁴⁵ There is a large body of literature which points towards the resurgence and importance of growing and eating local. Some of the works which I find important to my current research are: Joan Dye Gussow’s *This Organic Life: Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader* (2002), Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2008), Deborah Madison’s *Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America’s Farmers’ Markets* (2008), Wendell Berry’s *Bringing It to the Table: On Farming and Food* (2009), Ann Vileisis’s *Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back* (2010), Novella Carpenter’s *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer* (2010), Kristin Kimball’s *The Dirty Life: A Memoir of Farming, Food, and Love* (2011), Jenna Woginrich’s *Barnheart: The Incurable Longing for a Farm of One’s Own* (2011), Jennifer Cockrall-King’s *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution* (2012), Philip Ackerman-Leist’s *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems* (2013), Will Allen’s *The Good Food Revolution: Growing Healthy Food, People, and Communities* (2013), Holly Bauer’s *Food Matters* (2016), Mark Shepard’s *Restoration Agriculture* (2013), ed. Martha Hodgkins *Letters to a Young Farmer: On Food, Farming, and Our Future* (2017), and David Montgomery’s *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life* (2018).

³⁴⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

“get big or get out” mentality. Lastly, they are rising above the 1980s Farm Crisis, when so many American farmers were forced to leave the agricultural industry because of these policies.

Ultimately though, the themes addressed throughout this dissertation regarding Young Farmers point toward the constant politicization of the American agricultural sector, especially considering its current state of affairs under the Trump administration.

6.1 Farming in the Age of Trump

Throughout the various conversations, readings, and visual images I examined for this study, a combination of ideologies has reflected how American farming communities have changed throughout history to address technological innovation, socio-economic shifts, cultural transformations, and environmental changes. Yet, after Donald Trump was elected in the 2016 presidential election, American agriculture has become an even more politicized atmosphere. More specifically, citizens in farming and rural communities across the nation have gained attention in recent years because of their portrayal linked to Trump and the individuals who make up his voter base. However, some of the individuals depicted in these media representations seem like an outdated stereotype of individuals present in American farm culture.

Although now widely understood to be a slight misrepresentation, media coverage in the 2016 election emphasized Trump’s appeal with “white, working-class, middle-American, conservative” voters.³⁴⁷ At the same time, Donald Trump stuck to this semi-fabricated identity and relied on reproducing potentially negative stereotypes of American farmers in order to drive

³⁴⁷ Nicholas Carnes, “It’s Time to Bust the Myth: Most Trump Voters Were Not Working Class,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/?utm_term=.bd81bc4c9678.

up interest and perform better at the polls. Currently, he places emphasis on a similar group which exhibits the white majority in both rural and agricultural stereotypes thereby allowing this myth to continue. Meanwhile, Young Farmers and other marginalized groups tend to be under-represented. With that said, Trump seems to cling to the bipartisan divide occurring between the more conservative principles which have been recently characteristic of Midwest family farm and corporate farm models versus the viewpoints held by the Young Farmers described throughout this dissertation. Likewise, he and his constituents have perpetuated an antiquated or satirical representation of American farmers which do not usually align with the Young Farmer ideologies here.³⁴⁸ As a result, contemporary American farmers have been placed in a riskier and potentially more biased position than they have at other points in history. With these concepts in mind, there are multiple issues related to contemporary American agricultural policy which negatively affect farming communities socially, culturally, and politically. More specifically, Donald Trump's administration has made numerous national news headlines with major

³⁴⁸ Multiple examples of Donald Trump, his relatives, and material culture associated with his administration portraying instances related to American agricultural and rural stereotypes exist and have been distributed via the media in various formats. Some of these examples include: (1) a video circulated by Donald Trump on Twitter in which he was singing the "Green Acres" theme song during the 2005 Emmy Awards, (2) photographs of Melania Trump wearing a \$1380 Balmain flannel shirt and immaculate white-soled sneakers to work in the White House garden, (3) images of Donald Trump dressed in a business suit sitting in the driver's seat of a semi-truck and pretending to drive, and (4) "Make Our Farmers Great Again!" hats retailing at \$45 each on Trump's Make America Great Again Committee website. Instead of using the usual red and white color scheme, these hats are green and yellow which have historically represented John Deere tractors – a motif highly represented in American agricultural communities. There are multiple resources available about each of these circumstances, some of them are: Julia Zorthian's article "President Trump Pretended to Drive a Truck on the White House Lawn," (2017), Alyssa Hardy's article "Melania Trump Wore a Balmain Shirt to Garden, and the Internet Has Opinions," (2017), Justine Wise's article "Trump Tweets Video of 2005 'Green Acres' Emmy Award Performance to Hype Farm Bill Signing" (2018), and by visiting the Trump-Pence 2020 election website,

discussions revolving around the ongoing trade war with China and recent farmer bailouts to provide economic relief, as well as the passing of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.³⁴⁹

Before launching his presidential campaign in 2015, Donald Trump continually made remarks about trade practices between the United States and China.³⁵⁰ Amid those claims, he tweeted, “Remember, China is not a friend of the United States!”³⁵¹ Additionally, throughout his candidacy, he built U.S.-China trade policy into a major campaign issue and early in his presidency he struck deals with them to cover some agricultural products. However, in January of 2018, the Trump administration announced the placement of tariffs on some imports, with China criticizing the move. By March of that same year, Trump fully endorsed a trade war with China by tweeting: “When a country (USA) is losing many billions of dollars on trade with virtually every country it does business with, trade wars are good and easy to win. Example, when we are down \$100 billion with a certain country and they get cute, don’t trade anymore-we win big. It’s easy!”³⁵² In June 2018, his administration placed a 25 percent tariff on \$50 billion in Chinese goods and they swiftly retaliated by announcing a \$50 billion tariff on U.S. products, including some agricultural commodities.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Throughout the remainder of this section, I may also refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 as the “2018 Farm Bill.”

³⁵⁰ John W. Schoen and Jason Pramuk, “Trump Said Trade Wars Are ‘Easy to Win,’” *CNBC*, March 2, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/01/the-timeline-of-trump-china-tariffs-and-trade-war.html>.

³⁵¹ Donald Trump, Twitter post, May 16, 2014, 10:46pm, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/468628780991258625?lang=en>.

³⁵² Donald Trump, Twitter post, March 2, 2018, 2:50am, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/969525362580484098?lang=en>.

³⁵³ Schoen and Pramuk, “Trump Said Trade Wars Are ‘Easy to Win.’”

By late July of 2018, the Trump administration announced a \$12 billion emergency relief fund intended to benefit American farmers effected by financial burden during the trade war.³⁵⁴ However, it is widely contested this economic bailout was initiated as a “pacifier” to quiet protests from conservative farm groups prior to the 2018 midterm elections and to prove Trump’s willingness to establish his authority in the agricultural economy and amongst members of his voter base.³⁵⁵ By this I mean, he initiated the economic hardships placed on people in the agriculture industry; then, acted as a savior to the farmers that were harmed. However, what seems to be the most problematic about the recent trade crisis is it falls short with Trump’s campaign promises and delegitimizes the work completed in the agriculture industry, thereby negatively impacting American farmers. As Nebraskan Senator Ben Sasse quips, instead of making America great again, the president’s policies are “going to make it 1929 again” – a time of great turmoil in the United States, especially among American farmers.³⁵⁶ This overwhelming concern seems to be an overlapping theme in other recent agricultural policy making as well.

³⁵⁴ Damian Paletta and Caitlin Dewey, “White House Readies Plan for \$12 Billion in Emergency Aid to Farmers Caught in Trump’s Escalating Trade War,” *The Washington Post*, June 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/white-house-readies-plan-for-12-billion-in-emergency-aid-to-farmers-caught-in-trumps-escalating-trade-war/2018/07/24/7bec9af4-8f4d-11e8-b769-e3fff17f0689_story.html.

³⁵⁵ “Illinois Soybean Farmer Calls Trump’s \$12 Billion Aid Plan A ‘Pacifier’,” *CBS Chicago*, July 25, 2018, <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2018/07/25/trump-trade-war-farmer-aid-plan-12-billion-dollars/>.

³⁵⁶ Lucy Bayly, “USDA Has Paid Out \$7.7 Billion to Help Farmers Hit by Trump’s Tariffs,” *NBC News*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/usda-has-paid-out-7-7-billion-help-farmers-hit-n974516>.

Within the \$800 billion Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, items like crop insurance and nutrition generated widely contested public debate.³⁵⁷ Members of the agricultural sector consider the bill crucial in stabilizing markets and protecting farmers facing lower prices on their products.³⁵⁸ However, as the National Young Farmer’s Coalition (NYFC) has indicated, “land access is the top barrier young farmers and ranchers face.”³⁵⁹ Without farmland, there is not a future in farming and the passing of the 2018 Farm Bill “makes major investments in land access for the next generation of farmers.”³⁶⁰ Not only does it increase funding for farmland protection, but it also gives more financial capacity to lending agency’s which enable beginning farmers to be more flexible, putting them on a more direct path to owning affordable property.³⁶¹ Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill addresses other issues on the NYFC agenda, such as increasing funding to train the next generation of American farmers, expanding support for veteran farmers, farmers of color, and indigenous farmers, and developing programs which support local food and regional market growth.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ Caroline Kamm, “Young and Beginning Farmers: Don’t Abandon Us in the Farm Bill,” *Civil Eats*, June 25, 2018, <https://civileats.com/2018/06/25/young-and-beginning-farmers-dont-abandon-us-in-the-farm-bill/>.

³⁵⁸ Lauren Gibbons, “What the Latest Farm Bill Talks in Congress Could Mean for Michigan,” *Mlive.com*, July 7, 2018, https://expo.mlive.com/news/erry-2018/07/c33f72f2e784/farm_bill.html.

³⁵⁹ Andrew Bahrenburg, Holly Rippon-Butler, and Erin Foster West, “A Farm Bill for the Future,” *National Young Farmers Coalition*, December 12, 2018, https://www.youngfarmers.org/2018/12/farmbillforthefuture/?fbclid=IwAR12lJq7Lr6LZoUCljOszZbDt61aUDZvx_tTu9C90GJ1E8k-q-ndjLRNC8.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that Young Farmers are changing the faces and places which make up American agriculture; yet, it seems these newer identities are still recognized as a minority group among farming communities. As one article puts it:

The reality is that while some – mostly urban and suburban – communities can support a limited number of small- and medium-scale local and organic farmers, the vast majority of us, particularly in the middle of the country, are locked out. Despite the increase in farmers’ markets, the growing availability of organic foods, celebrity chefs who add farmers’ names to their menus, and lots of good intentions on the part of consumers, most farming in this country has not fundamentally changed in the last decade.³⁶³

What agriculture future advocates such as the NYFC make clear is there is room in American agricultural communities and landscapes for more Young Farmers to prosper and greater shifts to occur. The passing of the 2018 Farm Bill points towards a better understanding of these opportunities from current legislators, which could possibly lead to a more effective influence on the present and future discourses of farming in America. Given these most recent political shifts, I contend the state of American agriculture and the farmers who exist in those landscapes is even more unsettled than I originally predicted. By recognizing these most recent changes, I also acknowledge the limits of my current study and the many future research possibilities it offers.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

In the early stages of this research process, I shortsightedly made the decision to focus on specific physical attributes which I associated with a particular genre of farmers, whom I had personally witnessed gaining prominence in Midwestern farmers market locations. Additionally, I equated these same aesthetic characteristics with versions of the Young Farmers I saw being

³⁶³ Mary Berry and Debbie Barker, “Renewing a Vision for Rural Prosperity,” *Civil Eats*, August 15, 2018, <https://civileats.com/2018/08/15/renewing-a-vision-for-rural-prosperity-in-wendell-berry-country/?fbclid=IwAR0fl28oOPDT7OC5E8vllMmWHNq8BraHbVPbuUfEgKTi4jH7NuFViNkSryg>.

portrayed in a wide spectrum of contemporary agriculture publications (i.e. *Modern Farmer*, *Acres U.S.A.*, urbanexodus.com, wwwoof.org, etc.). In hindsight, this act of stereotyping behavior may have been rather limiting to the overall demographic shifts occurring across the agricultural landscape in America. After conducting this research, I have realized that there is a much larger movement of people who are involving themselves in agricultural processes, as well as migrating to rural locations and spaces involving the farming industry, and they do not all have a certain “look” or aesthetic. These neo-agrarians consist of all marginalized groups of people, including people of color, women, and other socio-economic groups which do not always identify as the group I have outlined in my definition of Young Farmers. Furthermore, the very act of referring to first-generation agricultural participants as “Young Farmers” may be problematic to some readers, especially those familiar with another marginalized group impacting American farming communities – individuals of retirement age who are participating in hobby farming.

In addition, I visited a large number of farmers market locations before finalizing my decision about which specific locations to include in this study. However, I may have overlooked some location attributes which could have been more beneficial for this research or provided a more lucrative sample of Young Farmers than those I have addressed previously. More specifically, I attempted to include places which would lead to a broad comparative study of producers and consumers participating in Michigan farmers markets, keeping in mind multiple aspects of identity and categories of difference as demarcating factors. In retrospect, other Michigan farmers market locations could have been fruitful places to cultivate informants, such as the Flint Farmers Market in Flint, Michigan, the Ann Arbor Downtown Farmers Market in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the Fulton Street Farmers Market in Grand Rapids, Michigan because of the broad range of racial and socio-economic class distinctions occurring in these populations.

However, my final decision regarding the inclusion of Midland, Traverse City, and Detroit hinged on my personal familiarity with these locations, which may have impacted the study negatively. Likewise, the ways in which I gathered informants (i.e. fieldwork conversations, email and social media correspondence, etc.) could point towards another limitation for this work. By this I mean, I found myself being rather selective in specific farmers market locations (i.e. the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market and Eastern Market) because the aesthetic quality of producers there was so saturated. Therefore, I restricted myself to only a handful of Young Farmers in each location. Instead of altering my methods to take a more quantitative approach, I hinged my research on the quality of informant responses.³⁶⁴

Additionally, while it seemed advantageous to focus strictly on three farmers markets originally, studying only these specific Michigan locations proved to be rather restrictive in the more generalized discussion of contemporary American agriculture. More specifically, the diverse assortment of socio-economic, political, demographic, and geographical climates in Michigan provides a compelling focus for agricultural analysis. However, upon further consideration, it seems that my personal biases towards farming there may have impacted this dissertation in a much larger capacity than I originally anticipated. Given the rich history of each farmers market and the farming industry in each location, I assumed it would be easier to uncover archival documents portraying attributes involving their past. While some of these spaces have a rich archival history tied to them, I still believe I could be more informed about others because of the lack of access to public documents and records. More specifically, I could have dug deeper into historical archives rather than rely so heavily on my personal experience.

³⁶⁴ Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, “How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability,” *Field Methods* vol 18 no 1, (Feb 2006): 59-82.

Retrospectively, some of the locations (i.e. Traverse City and Midland) could benefit from a longer discovery process. Although I recognize the limitations I have placed on this research, I also understand that they have led to several opportunities for future research. Most especially, I contend a much more vibrant discussion about specific farmers, other farmers market locations, as well as where our food comes from and how the farm-to-table movement has become more popular in the American restaurant scene are necessary to better convey the multiple advantages of changes occurring in the contemporary American farming industry.

Throughout this research, I have seen promise in future research possibilities by initiating more in-depth analyses of specific Young Farmers involved in this current study. More specifically, I believe I have only scratched the surface of what each Young Farmer has to offer in terms of understanding their local knowledge and the links it creates between sustainable lifestyle practices and identity formation. Several of these farmers have already expressed interest in participating in a deeper ethnographic study. In particular, Sarah Longstreth of Good Stead Farm in Hope, Michigan would be an interesting case study because of her commitment to growing organic, healthy food and the ways her farm contributes to the local community. Additionally, her agricultural style favors alternative farming measures, along with heirloom and heritage plant and animal species to encourage diversity in a community dominated by corporate agriculture and monocultural growing procedures. As a woman in a male dominated field, I believe it is important to tell the stories of women who speak and act as a voice within marginalized communities, such as that of American farming.

Secondly, I am also interested in extending my research beyond Michigan to include other locations (both rural and non-rural) and additional places where producers and consumers meet to cultivate change in the agricultural industry. As I have become familiar with Indiana

throughout my time at Purdue University, I am interested in comparatively studying the Bloomington, Lafayette/West Lafayette, and South Bend regions. I see this future research developing along the same trajectory as my current research path. I envision studying the Bloomington Community Farmers Market, Lafayette Farmers Market, the Purdue University Farmers Market, and the South Bend Farmers Market to analyze how Young Farmers in other locations consider their methods of local food production. These markets hold promise for a fruitful comparative study because of the mixed socio-economic infrastructure of the university setting tied to each location. Likewise, I've initiated research in a much broader American context in this same vein through readings tied to specific Young Farmers in the Hudson Valley, Central Appalachia, the Pacific Northwest, and parts of California who seem to be participating in agriculture in similar ways to the farmers market vendors I address throughout this study.³⁶⁵

While discovering the Midwest is not the only location American agriculture is changing, I also recognize that there is a gap in scholarly literature concerning how Young Farmers fit in to conversations involving national food policy and how current legislators are addressing future generations of people participating in agriculture. More specifically, while I have argued throughout this dissertation that activist group such as the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) are attempting to make judicial headway regarding shifts occurring across American agricultural demographics, it seems that there is room for more discussion regarding local food movements and how Young Farmers could help eliminate some of the pitfalls regarding the

³⁶⁵ Some of examples of these farmers/farms include: Sylvanaqua Farms in Earlysville, Virginia, Chaseholm Farm in Pine Plains, New York, Blue Hill Farm in Tarrytown, New York owned and operated by Chef Dan Barber, Cricket Creek Farm in Williamstown, Massachusetts, Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm in Swoope, Virginia, Fisheye Farm in Detroit, Michigan, Eliot Coleman's Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine, Primal Pastures in Murrieta, California, Hostile Valley Farm in Liberty, Maine, and Serenbe Farms in Palmetto, Georgia.

national hunger crisis, food deserts, the obesity epidemic, and other health and food related issues.³⁶⁶ Additionally, it seems Young Farmers are still having trouble being recognized within the national farming community for various reasons (i.e. the small number of acres they farm, the lower amounts of capital they bring to market, the newness of them to agricultural communities, etc.) and lawmakers still create policies based off of family farm and corporate farm models, thereby negatively impacting both the American farming industry and people in need. Therefore, while the research performed for this document has primarily focused on farming places and spaces in connection with the people relocating to them, it has frequently indicated the emergence of broader themes related to food accessibility, as well as the privileged and prohibitive barriers of socio-economic class distinctions placed on food products and more research could be done in those areas.

Along with the most recent migration patterns to agricultural spaces, I see this research expanding into a critical analysis of the slow movement, as well as its attachment to the farm-to-table industry.³⁶⁷ These types of dining environments are gaining increasing popularity as

³⁶⁶ There has been an abundance of research completed on these topics. Some of the studies, organizations, and food justice activists which could be researched further are: : *A Place at the Table* (2011), revisiting Marion Nestle's *Food Politics* (2002) in a more contemporary agricultural climate, how different organizations such as No Kid Hungry have motivated change in the lunch programs of public schools, analysis of Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Campaign and how it has been restructured after she left the White House, as well as the many conflicts created between USDA policy and its special treatment given to large agricultural conglomerates such as Monsanto.

³⁶⁷ Established in 1986, the Slow Movement began as a social protest against the fast food industry which was opening restaurants in undesirable locations, such as the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, Italy. It advocates for growing local food and traditional cooking methods. Carlo Petrini has been an instrumental voice in establishing the slow food movement. He has written several works about the subject, which include: *Slow Food: Collected Thoughts on Taste, Tradition, and the Honest Pleasures of Food* (2001), *Slow Food: The Case for Taste* (2003), *Slow Food Revolution: A New Culture for Eating and Living* (2006), *Slow Food Nation: Why*

culinary destinations offering artisanal and agricultural products, and use traditional and sustainable cooking methods, such as canning, pickling, preserving, and brining. Most of these locations have menus centering on products grown by local farmers and represent spaces which are visually stimulating for younger consumers. I have initiated research for this project at a variety of restaurants, including Gold Cash Gold, Le Petit Zinc, and Selden Standard in Detroit, Michigan, 9 Bean Rows and Harvest in Traverse City, Michigan, and The Public House in Bay City, Michigan. Additionally, with the resurgence of artisanal food and craft products in the restaurant industry, I'm also pondering what this means for the longevity of Young Farmers in the American agricultural landscape.

6.3 Epilogue

Since I began studying the topic of American farmers and the shifts occurring in the agricultural landscape across the United States, I've been questioned on a variety of pressing topics related to American farming at speaking and conference engagements, American Studies program functions, and within Purdue University classroom settings. Some of the broader topics brought up in discussion have been: what future scenarios of the farming industry look like based on the challenges made more evident by climate change; the devastating circumstances occurring in rural communities due to socio-economic decline and the out-migration of populations in those areas; the fluctuating demographics of people who have historically made up farming communities (i.e. aging, lower socio-economic class, white men without a college education); as well as the many variations of farmers markets throughout the Midwest and the multiple benefits

Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair (2013) and *Food & Freedom: How the Slow Food Movement Is Changing the World Through Gastronomy* (2015).

they have within their local communities. Alternatively, other people have inquired about aspects of agriculture generally stemming from places of nostalgia and whimsical experience. Usually, this also leads to them sharing a reminiscence related to their personal experience involving the farm. Some of them have been more notable than others, such as: “Did you ever remove corn tassels as a summer job?”, “Have you ever had a conversation with someone who self-identifies as a ‘hipster farmer’?”, and “What role do you think kombucha plays in establishing these alternative communities?” Likewise, I’ve been asked on more than one occasion if my high school participated in “tractor day(s)” – a custom going by the wayside in some rural locations in which farming youth (usually members of the local Future Farmers of America chapter) literally drive their tractor to school for celebratory purposes, such as Homecoming Week or National Farmer’s Day – and whether I have a preference between the green and red varieties.³⁶⁸

On countless occasions, I’ve heard anecdotes from people who share similar experiences with my own personal narrative. Some of their stories reflect oral histories passed down through familial generations about specific plots of land – remembered with pride as their ancestral homeland. Others have no idea where their version of “the farm” was geographically located; yet, they’ve heard agricultural acts were part of their family’s history and are inspired to find out more about their connection to the land. Some recall how their grandmother spent many of her late summer days and evenings canning tomatoes, blanching and freezing green beans, brining pickles, and preserving strawberries for jam using the crops she personally harvested to enjoy throughout the dreary winter months ahead. They spent their childhood traipsing through the fields of the farm, making music on blades of grass gathered there, playing hide and seek in the

³⁶⁸ Justine Lofton, “Fremont Students Drive Tractors to School for 14th Farming Celebration,” *MLive.com*, March 29, 2018, https://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2018/03/fremont_students_drive_tractor.html.

hayloft of the barn, learning the subtle difference between the green sprouts of alfalfa, soybeans, wheat shafts, and corn shoots in the spring, and relishing in the distinct sweet smells they produced with the windows rolled down on an early autumn evening drive. It seems to me that rarely anyone I've spoken to about my research has not had a memory to share with me about producing their own food, or not known someone involved in some version of the farm at one point or another.

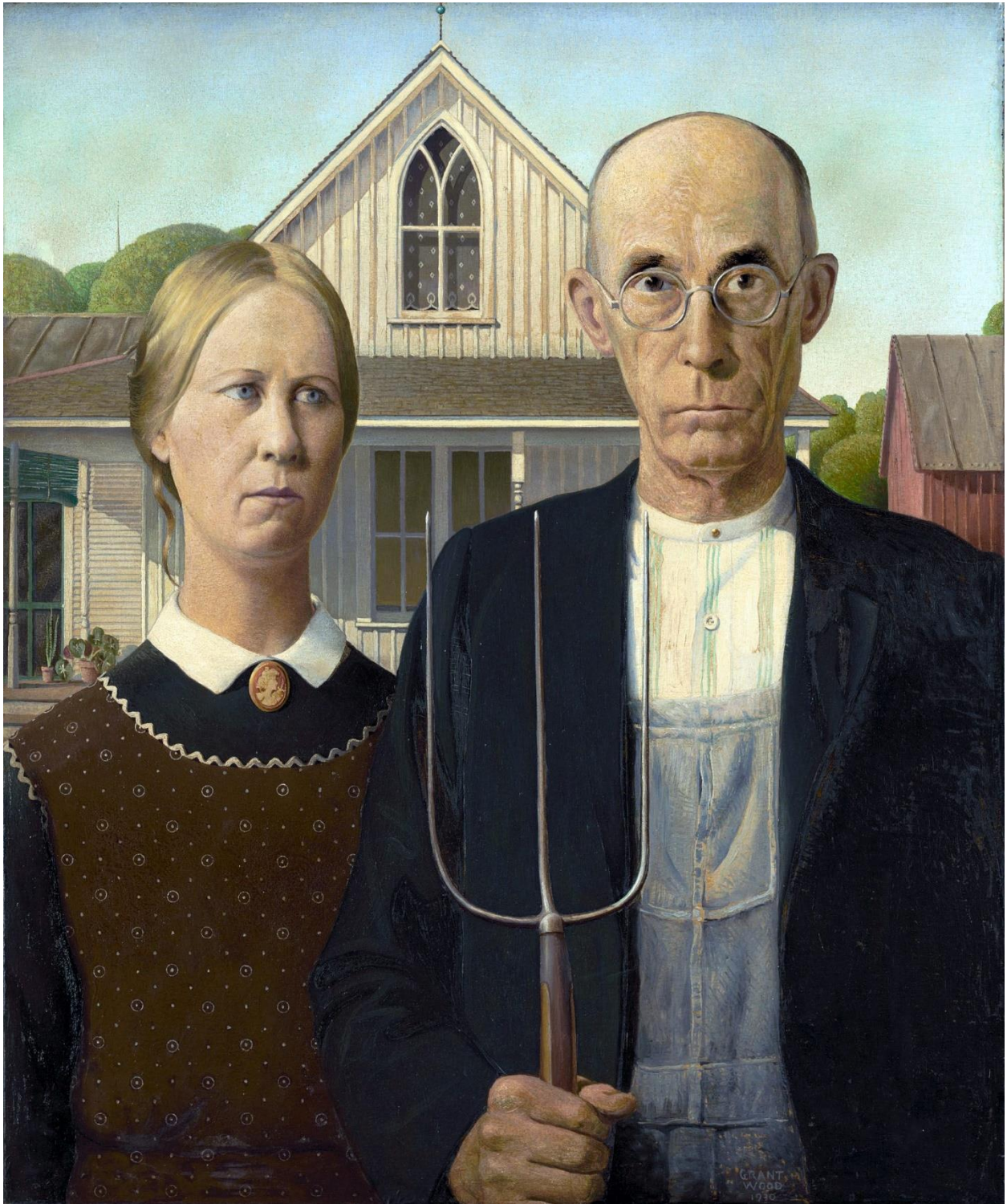
In these ways, it's hard not to romanticize farms. It becomes especially difficult when people you have dearly loved (and memories you sincerely cherish) are attached to those places. My own version of The Farm has changed in a variety of ways after I decided to study these subjects. Since the passing of my grandmother in the Fall of 2014, it's been hard to understand how to progress through this research and remain emotionally detached from it. Not only has The Farm served as a pleasant respite from my academic and professional responsibilities, but it also acted as a directional compass for me in times of personal turmoil. The simple fact of my grandmother being there always made it an even more revered place for me. Without her, it seems The Farm has lost some of its restorative power and it will take much longer to heal after her absence; yet, it eventually will, even if that means shifting my personal ideology to allow those changes to occur. After many conversations, I know that other people share similar feelings about their farms. What I hope these acts of growth point toward for the future of American farming and farmers is that by simply having discussions about our ancestors performing agricultural acts and sharing stories about the spaces they inhabited, we still remain connected to the land and will continue to for generations to come.

* * * * *

*You know, farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil,
and you're a thousand miles from the cornfield.*

– Dwight D Eisenhower, Address at
Bradley University, September 1956

APPENDIX A. GRANT WOOD'S AMERICAN GOTHIC



Wood, Grant. 1930. Oil paint on Beaverboard. 78 by 65.3 centimeters. Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago.

APPENDIX B. IRB PROTOCOL INFORMATION



HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

To:	SHARRA VOSTRAL UNIV
From:	JEANNIE DICLEMENTI, Chair Social Science IRB
Date:	11/07/2018
Committee Action:	Expedited Approval for Renewal - Category(6) (7)
IRB Approval Date	11/06/2018
IRB Protocol #	1510016644
Renewal Version	Renewal-004: Renewal-004:
Study Title	Tradition to Fruition: Developing Communities of Cosmopolitan Farmers
Expiration Date	11/05/2021
Subjects Approved:	20

The above-referenced protocol has been approved by the Purdue IRB. This approval permits the recruitment of subjects up to the number indicated on the application and the conduct of the research as it is approved.

The IRB approved and dated consent, assent, and information form(s) for this protocol are in the Attachments section of this protocol in CoeusLite. Subjects who sign a consent form must be given a signed copy to take home with them. Information forms should not be signed.

Record Keeping: The PI is responsible for keeping all regulated documents, including IRB correspondence such as this letter, approved study documents, and signed consent forms for at least three (3) years following protocol closure for audit purposes. Documents regulated by HIPAA, such as Authorizations, must be maintained for six (6) years. If the PI leaves Purdue during this time, a copy of the regulatory file must be left with a designated records custodian, and the identity of this custodian must be communicated to the IRB.

Change of Institutions: If the PI leaves Purdue, the study must be closed or the PI must be replaced on the study through the Amendment process. If the PI wants to transfer the study to another institution, please contact the IRB to make arrangements for the transfer.

Changes to the approved protocol: A change to any aspect of this protocol must be approved by the IRB before it is implemented, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. In such situations, the IRB should be notified immediately. To request a change, submit an Amendment to the IRB through CoeusLite.

Continuing Review/Study Closure: No human subject research may be conducted without IRB approval. IRB approval for this study expires on the expiration date set out above. The study must be close or re-reviewed (aka continuing review) and approved by the IRB before the expiration date passes. Both Continuing Review and Closure may be requested through CoeusLite.

Unanticipated Problems/Adverse Events: Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, serious adverse events, and serious noncompliance with the approved protocol must be reported to the IRB immediately through CoeusLite. All other adverse events and minor protocol deviations should be reported at the time of Continuing Review.

PURDUE

U N I V E R S I T Y

Questionnaire/Survey

Study Title: Tradition to Fruition: Developing Communities of Cosmopolitan Farmers

Research Investigators' Names and Departments (include Advisor, if researcher is a student):

**Katje Armentrout, American Studies Department
Dr. Sharra Vostral, History Department**

Contact information for researcher (and Advisor, if researcher is a student):

**Katje Armentrout, (e-mail) armentro@purdue.edu (phone) 989-954-5032
Dr. Sharra Vostral (e-mail) svostral@purdue.edu (phone) 765-494-4132**

- Are you originally from this community?
 - If so, have you been able to subsidize your way of life principally on your method of farming? Or have you had to seek employment away from the farm?
 - If not, what drew you to this community?
- At what age did you become interested in farming?
 - Where did you start learning?
 - Who were your mentors?
 - What was the impetus to pursue farming?
 - What kind of education or career did you pursue before farming?
- Could you describe to me what you do on a typical day on your farm?
- Can you tell me some of your favorite farming experiences?
 - What do you think has been the biggest reward?
 - What does it mean to you to be able to farm?
- How familiar were you with the area before you moved here?
 - What do you wish people understood about farming?
- How did you come to inhabit your new rural environment?
- What made you want to participate in the farming lifestyle?
 - Are there any cultural, sociological, economical, or environmental reasons?
 - What do you see as the biggest impediment to entering the field of farming?

- How did you learn your skill set?
 - Do you think you practice sustainable farming methods?
 - How would you characterize the differences between the farming you do and corporate farming?
- How many generations has your family been involved in farming?
- Why do you think it is essential to participate in the agricultural industry?
- What specific things that you do on the farm are similar to how your grandparents would have farmed?
 - What methods or practices do you think about with the term “traditional” farming?
 - How applicable would these techniques be to you?
 - What are the reasons that you continue these methods?
- Do you talk to younger generations of farmers about agricultural methods?
 - If so, how important is it to you?
 - Would you consider these methods “traditional” and why or why not?
- What changes have you seen in the community economically?
- What changes have you seen in the community socially?
 - How do you feel about these changes?
- What place does the farmers market have to your sense of community?
 - How does the farmers market factor in to the farms overall productivity?
 - What is the relationship of the farmers markets to the farm’s profitability?
 - What other ways do you market your goods other than selling them at the farmers market?
- How do you see your work on the farm benefiting future generations of farmers and non-farmers alike?
- Do you think there is anything else I should know regarding your work in farming?

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Tradition to Fruition: Developing Communities of Cosmopolitan Farmers

Dr. Sharra Vostral

History Department

Purdue University

- **What is the purpose of this study?**

This research study is being conducted in order to understand the social and cultural contexts of contemporary agrarian culture of the United States and your role within that community.

- **What will I do if I choose to be in this study?**

You are being invited to participate in a research study via an audio recorded interview with a researcher who will ask you to tell stories and answer questions about your life and your involvement within the agricultural community.

- **How long will I be in the study?**

This assessment is expected to last approximately one to two hours. After you have completed the interview, you will be finished with your participation in the study, unless you contact the research team to share more of your thoughts at a later date.

- **What are the possible risks or discomforts?**

This is a confidential interview. The risks for your participation in this interview are minimal and no greater than you would encounter in everyday life. Should you become distressed about issues in your life as a result of the interview, the interviewer will provide you with information for confidential mental health services.

- **Are there any potential benefits?**

There are no direct benefits to you, but your assistance may help with the development of sustainable living practices for people in general.

- **Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Every reasonable measure will be taken to ensure your confidentiality. Although every reasonable effort will be made to protect your confidentiality, such protection cannot be guaranteed. The research team has taken several steps to protect your confidentiality. Your name will only be used with permission. Names will be used in final publications derived from this study. If you so choose, your interview will be written with the use of a pseudonym rather than identifying information. Digital recordings will also be coded and password protected. This data will not be stored on an unsecured network drives. Digital voice files will be destroyed after the interviews have been transcribed and cross-checked. Transcripts from the interview data will be kept indefinitely. You may ask to have the recording or any portion of it to be erased at any time. The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

- **What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?**

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Dr. Sharra Vostral, (e-mail) svostral@purdue.edu (phone) 765-494-4132 or Katje Armentrout, (e-mail) armentro@purdue.edu (phone) 989-954-5032. Katje Armentrout is the first point of contact for this study.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.,
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. I will be offered a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Participant's Signature	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Participant's Name	
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Researcher's Signature	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date

APPENDIX C. PAUL HARVEY'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

"And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker."

So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper – and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board."

So God made a farmer.

"I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild...

"Somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry and have to wait lunch until his wife's done feeding visiting ladies – then tell the ladies to be sure and come back real soon -- and mean it."

So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt and watch it die and then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year'..."

"I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire...

"Who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps...

'Who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his 40-hour week by Tuesday noon. Then, painin' from tractor back, put in another 72."

So God made a farmer.

God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double-speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place.

So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails..."

And, yet, gentle enough to yeap lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets.

And who'll stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark.

So God made a farmer.

It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners...somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder... and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church.

"Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing...

Who would laugh... and then sigh... and then reply, with smiling eyes...

When his son says he wants to spend his life doing what dad does.

So – God made a farmer.”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Paul Harvey, “On the Eighth Day, God Made A Farmer,” *Altus Times*, May 19, 1986.

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