

Spring 4-28-2016

The Farmers' Market Experience: Food to Fuel the Body and Soul

Ellery Brett Hinson

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.umw.edu/student_research



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinson, Ellery Brett, "The Farmers' Market Experience: Food to Fuel the Body and Soul" (2016). *Student Research Submissions*. 59.
https://scholar.umw.edu/student_research/59

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by Eagle Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Submissions by an authorized administrator of Eagle Scholar. For more information, please contact archives@umw.edu.

THE FARMERS' MARKET EXPERIENCE: FOOD TO FUEL THE BODY AND SOUL

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Ellery Brett Hinson

April 2016

By signing your name below, you affirm that this work is the complete and final version of your paper submitted in partial fulfillment of a degree from the University of Mary Washington. You affirm the University of Mary Washington honor pledge: "I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."

Ellery B. Hinson
(digital signature)

04/28/16

The Farmers' Market Experience: Food to Fuel the Body and Soul

Ellery Hinson

Anthropology 481

Gable

April 12, 2016

Introduction

If you ask Tom, one of the Fredericksburg farmers' market managers, when the market started, he will tell you 1728, with a big grin on his face, waiting for a reaction either of amazement or skepticism. Even the signs around Hurkamp Park where the market is held all agree with Tom, reading "Fredericksburg Farmer's Market Since 1728 Buy Fresh. Buy Local." Tom gives questioning shoppers a history very similar to the one given on the farmers' market's website: "Our original market is located at Hurkamp Park in historic downtown, and is a part of a long-standing tradition of local merchants selling their wares on the street. Fredericksburg's open-air commerce dates back earlier than the City's founding in 1728, but only in the last quarter century has the Fredericksburg Farmers Market been organized at Hurkamp Park" ("The Farmers Market Co" 2015). In the end though, shoppers all come out of their short history lesson with Tom feeling that they are a part of a long standing cultural tradition.

While Tom is not wrong that there has been an outdoor marketplace since the founding of Fredericksburg, the farmers' market and the ideas associated with it are actually a fairly recent invention. Back in 1728, the market was where people obtained their food. It was not an alternative food source like it is today. The Fredericksburg farmers' market as we find it today did not begin until six years ago in 2010, when it became organized with a manager through the city of Fredericksburg. Before it became managed it was, as one of the current managers, Becky, puts it, "a total free for all. Vendors weren't allowed on Prince Edward St. until five a.m. They would sleep in their cars on William St. to be the first to pull onto Prince Edward for 'prime' spaces. Some vendors would pay people to sleep there for them. There were fights. And no one regulated what vendors brought." Not many people at the market know this part of the farmers'

market history, and those that do do not speak of it as being part of the long standing tradition that they believe they are a part of today. The cultural tradition they have created is one based on simplicity of life. Shoppers believe the “old-timey” feel of the market is a connection to the past -- the way things really felt. Their expectations of what an old market should feel like has guided them in their invention of a cultural heritage.

The Fredericksburg farmers’ market is one of 8,284 farmers’ markets in the United States, according to a survey taken in 2014. Twenty years before that, in 1994, there were only 1,755 (“Number of U.S. Farmers’ Markets” 2014). What caused such a rapid growth in farmers’ markets? To answer this question it is important to understand that farmers’ market popularity has been rising and falling its entire way through the past century. But now, it is peaking once more for a different reason.

According to Jane Pyle’s 1971 article “Farmers’ Markets in the United States: Functional Anachronisms,” farmers’ markets have been in decline since about 1880 (Pyle, 1971:176). The original purpose of the market was to bring food sources into urban areas, but as markets became less centralized they were replaced with wholesalers and neighborhood grocers (Pyle, 1971:179). We see the first reestablishment of markets during World War I (Pyle, 1971:179). This trend of bringing back farmers’ markets during hard economic times, due to war or economic downturns, continues up until the year the article was written in 1969, but the overall popularity of the market was still in a general decline. New shipping methods and preservatives eliminated the need to make frequent trips to the market for fresh food (Pyle, 1971:196).

Returning to my earlier question of why the market is now gaining popularity again, Pyle’s history of the market would suggest it is in response to recent economic struggles, in this

case, the 2008 economic recession. I would argue that this is not why the farmer's market has been brought back. The growth in markets across the United States did not begin after the recession hit. This growth began well beforehand. Also, the market was used in the 20th century to provide a cheaper food source -- the farmers' market was free of middlemen between the farmer and consumer. Today's farmers' markets though are no longer a cheaper alternative to the grocery store. Usually they are quite a bit more costly than the grocery store. Something other than an economic crisis has brought about the rise of farmers' markets this time.

Looking at Pyle's article again, she makes a prediction that the market will begin to gain popularity again from 1969 onward due to the market's "old-fashioned virtues of individuality and direct connection with Mother Earth," not as a reaction to hard times (Pyle, 1971:197). People no longer attend the farmers' market to keep stocked on groceries or to keep the country afloat during wartime. The problems people see in today's world are more specific to the food system itself. Consumers worry what is in their food with it passing through so many hands before it reaches their shopping cart. They feel their food has become industrial and impersonal, as though something is missing from their food spiritually -- they are disconnected from the original source, what Pyle called Mother Nature. Our food is losing the sociality it once had when it came from local sources. Before the farmers' market lost its popularity in the late 19th century, it was the standard method of obtaining food, but now, to borrow Pyle's word, it has become an anachronism that embodies an old way of life where people are in touch with their community and environment.

In addition to farmers' market popularity, studies of the farmers' market and food justice as a whole have grown. Slow food movements, sustainable agriculture, clean eating and many

other movements that are all designed to fix our food economy have gained the attention of mindful shoppers as well as researchers (Anne Meneley, Antonio Tencati, Laszlo Zsolnai, Stephen Schneider, Alison Alkon, Michael Pollan, Josée Johnson, Shyon Baumann, Patrizia Longo, Bill McKibben). This is a trend that is also noted by Brad Weiss in his article “Making Pigs Local: Discerning the Sensory Character of Place.” He claims this is because “industrialization characteristically undermines the kinds of depth and connoisseurship requisite for terroir, the “taste of place” valued among advocates of ‘Slow’ and ‘local’ foods” (Weiss, 2011:438). He is claiming that all these food movements are about more than making our foods less industrial and more natural. It is about “taste of place,” and inventing an environment to experience through food. He also points out an idea that is central to my own research at the Fredericksburg farmers’ market:

The largely cosmopolitan producers and consumers of the niche-market... describe themselves as committed to support of local farming systems, and oppose the perils, especially ecological, of the corporate, industrial food system. However, they rarely make reference to the problems of racial disparities... or express concern for the condition of workers on ‘local farms’ ... To be sure, these cosmopolitans in the Piedmont are ‘progressive’ in their politics, and often work assiduously to make local food more affordable, and provide outreach to underresourced consumers... Nonetheless, participants in this largely white, ‘middle-class’ movement do overlook some problems of inclusiveness (Weiss, 2011: 439).

In my own year of ethnographic fieldwork at the Fredericksburg farmers’ market, I have found Pyle’s prediction and Weiss’s observations both to be true. The market is now serving a

different purpose for shoppers: it puts them in touch with something they believe they have lost. I found three themes that are central to the farmers' market culture: community, the economy, and authenticity. I argue that the farmers' market is gaining such momentum because it provides these three experiences which people believe to be vital to a healthy, stable food system, as well as their own physical and spiritual well being. Somewhere between the farmers' market and the supermarket, people have lost the intimate connection they had with their food.

The Economy

Let me begin by establishing the key players at the farmers' market: vendors and shoppers. The vendor is perceived as the shoppers' connection to nature, which I will elaborate on in the next section. The farmers' market shopper has become a well known stereotype: a white, middle to upper class, suburbanite who possesses high morals for their own health as well as the local economy's. What David Brooks has named Bobos, derived from the words Bourgeois and bohemian: "people seemed to have combined the countercultural sixties and the achieving eighties into one social ethos. ... a cultural consequence of the information age. In this era ideas and knowledge are at least as vital to economic success as natural resources and finance capital" (Brooks, 2000:10). My interviews with market goers reveal that they fit into the Bobo category themselves, and acknowledge that Bobos are the main shoppers at the farmers market. "White," "rich," "wealthy," and "yuppy" are some of the more frequent descriptions I get in interviews when I ask my informant to describe who shops at the market.

The spending choices this group of shoppers makes is a form of conspicuous consumption. Introduced by Thorstein Veblen, conspicuous consumption is a method used by

consumers to perform a high social status. By purchasing in excess, buying the flashiest or fanciest products available, consumers can project an image of themselves to others that they are wealthy. Shopping at the farmers' market accomplishes this same task, but in a more roundabout kind of way. Bobos have found a way of consuming that satisfies their Bohemian ideals. As Brooks puts it, "the Bobo renounces accumulation and embraces cultivation. He must show, in the way he spends his money, that he is conscientious not crass. The emerging code of financial correctness allows Bobos to spend money without looking like one of the vulgar Yuppies they despise" (Brooks 85). Spending in this particular class is no longer about displaying the luxuries you can afford, it is about putting your money towards something that is practical, functional, and preferably, moral and progressive. Bobos can still create an image of themselves through their purchases, as Veblen suggested; however, now, this image is of a community conscious, moral consumer.

In my own observations, I have found this demographic to view it as a moral duty to contribute to the local economy by shopping at the farmers' market. This need arises out of communitarian ideals in which the individual's relationship with the community (in this case the farmers' market community) is a vital aspect of defining one's selfhood (Etzioni, 2015:1). They feel that shopping at the market says something to the rest of society about what kind of people they are. Their moral consciousness spreads beyond the good of the farmers' market and local community to a national level. Bobos are a group of people who educate themselves with material such as the film *Food Inc.* and numerous books by food justice activist Michael Pollan. Many customers I have spoken with all refer to these sources when discussing their reasons for attending the farmers' market, *Food Inc.* being one of the more popular conversation topics

among this group of shoppers. For instance, a couple who just moved to Fredericksburg from California came up to the managers' tent one day to ask a few questions about the market. Becky told them that they can order a turkey for Thanksgiving from one of the vendors. Tom explained that when you order a turkey or chicken, they kill it the day before the market -- another guarantee that you are getting it fresh. Becky referenced *Food Inc.* in their discussion of purchasing poultry through the market. The woman responded enthusiastically, saying that *Food Inc.* was exactly why she was looking into buying her meat from the farmers' market now.

But is this food justice-conscious, white, middle-class, Bobo stereotype the only shopper to be found at the market? From my experience working for the managers selling tokens, I have found that this is not entirely true. While this stereotype does make up a large portion of the farmers' market shoppers, there is another population of shoppers present. This group consists of food stamp users.

Those on food stamps or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) can use their EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card to purchase tokens at the farmers' market (USDA 2015). These tokens are wooden coins resembling poker chips, each worth one dollar. The tokens stamped with a blue "\$1" are the tokens purchased, while the ones stamped with a red "\$1" are the bonus tokens. The token program works similarly to an ATM. Customers who use SNAP can swipe for tokens and are matched the amount they purchase up to ten dollars. If they buy five dollars worth of tokens, they are given an extra five. If they buy ten, they are matched an extra ten. If they buy fifteen, they are still only given an extra ten. The amount that they buy (blue tokens) can be spent on anything that is normally covered by food stamps, and the free

tokens that they are matched with (red tokens) can only be spent on produce. The money used to match token purchases all comes out of grants.

The token program is open to debit and credit card users as well, although they are not bonused any extra coins and receive tokens stamped with a green "\$5." According to Becky, the token program is the selling point for EBT users more than it is for debit and credit card users: "There's a misconception that farmers' markets are for wealthy white people and that's not the case anymore." Becky says that on social media and other means of advertisement she "uses all the buzz words like 'fresh' and 'local'" to get the attention of non-SNAP users, or Bobos. For those on food stamps, she emphasizes the bonus tokens. Becky summed up her advertising goals as getting the suburbanites hyped for local food, and for SNAP users, simply getting them to the market, the ultimate goal being to level the socio-economic playing field of a supply and demand market.

Becky's statement that shoppers are no longer just "wealthy white people" was a change that had to be consciously done. I was asked to record each customer's race and amount purchased to monitor the progress of diversification. The token program, with the help of Becky's advertising methods, has given the farmers' market a slight boost in racial as well as financial diversity, but SNAP users are still outnumbered by Bobos: out of the \$129,000 spent by token users in 2014, \$34,000 came from EBT transactions and bonus tokens, while \$86,000 came from credit card users (Borst, 2015). The capitalist economy in which the market is taking place is driven by supply and demand, and the demand is directed by the consumer. Those with more capital hold more sway over what is in demand. By shopping at the farmers' market, Bobos feel that they are making a statement that they want a food system like the farmers' market, not

the supermarket. In a farmers' market setting, this imbalance of power can be exaggerated, as prices at the market are much higher than at the supermarket. The token program is an attempt to redistribute consumer power by giving SNAP users more capital. It allows a wider range of people to shop at the market, and have their voices heard in the economy.

However, the consumer voices of SNAP users are still rather faint. As Becky said, they come to the market because they are given a ten dollar bonus. Were it up to them, as consumers, they might not choose to shop at the farmers' market, or perhaps they would choose different items to buy. SNAP users usually buy no more than ten dollars worth of tokens at a time. Since they are only matched up to ten dollars each week, this will give them the greatest number of bonus tokens for the least amount of money. Tokens can only be spent at the market. If they purchase any more than ten, the tokens that run over that ten dollar limit end up being wasteful on such expensive food. That money could have gone towards cheaper food from the grocery store. This leads me to believe that SNAP users would shop elsewhere were it not for the bonus tokens. Weiss notes a similar trend in his own study of local food in North Carolina: "For if place is made through the recognition of critical qualities (skills and tastes, objectified and embodied), its important to ask what, and more importantly, who, is not recognized in such place making" (Weiss, 2011: 456). According to Weiss, and my own findings, those with less consumer power are not actively involved in creating the market space. However, I would argue that SNAP users do serve a purpose at the market -- probably not one that they intended to serve. SNAP users' presence at the market serves more to reassure the Bobos that their preferred shopping location is not constructed to meet elitist needs. SNAP users make the market feel more

inclusive and like a community gathering place, which is more so what the Bobos are looking for, rather than just an alternative food source.

Most shoppers, SNAP users and non-SNAP users alike, ask about what is in season, where their favorite vendors are located that day, and where they can use their tokens. However, it is only SNAP users that will ask about getting their money's worth from their tokens. One example of this occurred one day while I was selling tokens at the manager's tent. A SNAP user asked me about the rules of the token program. Since SNAP users can only be matched up to ten dollars once a week, this woman wanted to know when the week started. Her concern was that some people might come to the Fredericksburg market on Saturday and have ten dollars matched and then drive to another market later in the same week to get matched an additional ten dollars. Tom answered this question saying that they trust people not to do that. She said that if someone was willing to spend that much time traveling for an extra ten dollars then they must really need it. Tom agreed but then added that gas to get from market to market would end up costing them more than it was worth to get the extra money.

I do not think Tom realized it, but what he was pointing out here was the cycle of poverty. The token system is structured to reinforce itself. People living in poverty do not have enough money to exploit the weak spots in the system. I do not believe this was done intentionally. This is something that already exists in our food economy. Whether this woman was asking in order to find a way to cheat the system herself or as a way of patrolling other SNAP users, I do not know, but the main takeaway from this incident is that SNAP shoppers are

more focused on the financial aspects of the farmers' market than they are on spiritual or moral fulfillment, like the "wealthy white people" or Bobos are.

Now that I have explained the shoppers' motives to go to the farmers' market, this brings about the question why do vendors attend the market? Are they looking for the same spiritual fulfillment as the majority of market shoppers? Where do they fit into the food economy? Fredericksburg farmers' market vendors come from a wide range of economic backgrounds. Some vendors attend the market to make a living, their sole income being farmers' market sales. Others come to the market more as a hobby, or something to do on Saturdays, or to earn a little extra pocket money. One vendor I asked simply said he comes to the market "to hang out." Among all the Bobo shoppers though, there is one vendor in particular who has become a favorite: Donald.

Having been at the market since the 1970's, Donald has gotten to know a large amount of shoppers, who have all come to view him as the embodiment of vendor expectations. Donald's entire income is from selling at the market. He lives in a double wide set on four or five acres of land where he grows all his own produce, raises turkeys, chickens, and ducks for their eggs, and his wife makes jam, pickles, and other canned items. Donald maintains his land and house on his own, learning whatever skills he needs to get a job done -- electrical wiring being the skill I was most impressed with. Anything else that he does not have the skill set or equipment to do, he will have a friend do, paying him handsomely with preserves or whatever produce he has on hand. This is a lifestyle that is displayed at the market between vendors, and has become an attraction to the Bobo shopper. Donald is a prime example of the kind of vendor Bobo shoppers are

looking for; he represents the kind of social food economy that they are looking for. They feel that he is the kind of vendor who makes obtaining food social again.

Vendors are always trading with each other at the market. They are part of what appears to be a peripheral market system functioning within a larger set of capitalist mechanisms. A peripheral market, as defined by Paul Bohannan and George Dalton is a marketplace in which people are involved in the marketplace as buyers or sellers, but the exchange of wares for money is not the primary way people get what they need. They obtain what they need through reciprocity and redistribution -- there is no set price based on supply and demand like there is in a capitalist economy (Bohannan and Dalton, 1962:7). While the farmers' market does not exist completely free of capitalist influence (prices are still influenced by supply and demand) it does share some of the same features of a peripheral market through the vendors' use of reciprocity.

Reciprocity between vendors is constant throughout the market day. The group of vendors that I fell in with and gained my most in depth ethnographic data from trade with each other the entire market day. For example, Clark sells coffee beans and has a fresh brewed pot of coffee always at the ready to supply customers with samples. Donald, whose tent is next to his, will sip on his coffee throughout the day, and Clark will usually leave at the end of the day with a few half pint jars of Donald's jam, supplied at no charge. John, who is in his eighties, needs help everyday setting up at the market, so Clark usually lets John share a tent with him, and in return John supplies him with a pie or a box of cookies made by his wife. None of these exchanges are deliberately arranged -- there is no conversation where one vendor says to the

other, “I’ll give you X in exchange for Y.” They see it as friends taking care of each other, or returning a favor.

This generalized reciprocity in some cases becomes a reflection of vendor prestige. The more a vendor can give, the more deserving of favors he or she is. Donald, for example, seems to give a lot more than he receives. From Donald’s generosity and constant gift giving, he earns favors from other people. His lawyer for example works for him for free, in return for produce. Donald’s gift giving has earned him respect from vendors and shoppers alike, who are eager to return his numerous favors. Donald makes it very clear though that his gift giving is not completely un-altruistic. For example, one day on a visit to Donald’s farm, we went out into the yard so Donald could show me, Becky, and Tom one of his latest projects. He lifted the corner of a camo tarp revealing a pile of organically shaped cedar boards, cut and leveled from a tree on his property. He told us that he took the wood to Sy, another market vendor who does wood work, and had him cut it for him. He said Sy would not take any payment and told him, “I don’t charge friends.” Donald followed this up by saying, “and neither do I.”

This brings me back to my point that Donald is one of those vendors that is admired and respected by shoppers. He accounts for factors other than money when it comes to market transactions. This hidden peripheral market that exists among the vendors is the market that Bobos are looking to tap into. Only the regulars who maintain a relationship with the vendors can participate in this more social food exchange, which they see as being closer to their understanding of the way things used to be, and therefore more authentic.

Authenticity

As established in the previous section, the farmers' market aims to include all socioeconomic classes, however the food economy is arranged in such a way that it is only fully accessible to the upper-middle class. This class has become a dominating force at the farmers' market and a well known culture of their own, as observed by Brooks, who named them Bobos. Bobos are the farmers' market shoppers who I will be referring to in my explanation of the shopper's desire to consume the authentic.

One central idea that I found among shoppers throughout the entire course of my research was that the "old-timey" feel of the market was a huge incentive to shop there. One woman came up to the managers' tent one day to tell me that all the farmers' markets in the Fredericksburg area were great, but she likes the one in Hurkamp Park the best, stating, "They're all wonderful! But this one has the romance to it." A vendor I interviewed said, "I love... the old fashioned feel of a market." This idea of the farmers' market being "romantic" and "old fashioned" supports Pyle's claim that the farmers' market has become a functional anachronism. The market now serves as an invented cultural heritage. We see independent farmers selling at the market. Their farms are not highly industrial with genetically modified produce or hormone filled livestock. Shoppers see the farmers' market as an embodiment of how they believe farming used to be before the development of industrial farm technologies. The farmer then serves as the means by which they can connect with their perceived cultural heritage as well as more natural and authentic food.

How did the farmer come to represent this? And why have Bobos decided that the farmers market is part of their cultural heritage? Today's market shopper is looking to consume

more than food. The experience of shopping at the farmers' market gives them a spiritual connection to something that they believe to be earthy, original, even gritty. They see the farmers' market as the primitive beginnings of the modern day grocery store. To shoppers, the farmers' market is old, untouched, and almost tribal feeling.

The origins of the industrial capitalist market were thought to be European. This was a fact that became widely accepted. Capitalism became associated with being Western and modern, while peripheral markets, marketless societies, and subsistence economies became associated with more "exotic" and "primitive" cultures. We have since learned that capitalist markets were appearing in Japan without European influence (Pearson, 1991:83). Capitalism is not a Western invention. However, capitalism has been considered Western for so long that we have come to understand it as belonging to Western societies. Capitalism is what we know and understand -- it is normal and standard to us. Any other type of economy is now the other. It feels exotic. People have come to understand capitalism as the final modern end point of a long progression from more primitive markets. But these non-capitalist markets are not seen as a bad thing by Bobos. The people of the peripheral market may seem back in time to shoppers, but this only makes them more admirable -- the farmers are the noble savages that shoppers come to see and interact with.

Shoppers see how vendors trade with each other and offer better deals to friends and family -- farmers are seen as putting their "tribe" before money. They are seen as being in tune with the natural rhythms of the seasons, and using purely what the Earth gives them for survival. Shoppers believe that the farmers are an anachronism just like the market. They are existing in a modern, industrial, capitalist world but living "simply." They are seen as being more genuine

and original humans, unpolluted by industry -- “noble savages.” The food they grow is believed to have this same authenticity to it. No machines planted or harvested their crops -- someone walked up and down rows of plants harvesting their crop by hand. No chemicals were sprayed on their plants or injected into their livestock. Shoppers see the vendors’ wares at the market with the understanding that they were grown exactly the way nature intended, without the interference of industry.

Shoppers believe they have lost their personal connection to nature somewhere in the evolution from the open-air market to the supermarket. Early on in the market season, about mid-April, a woman approached me and Tom asking, “Where is the fruit?” Tom laughed and answered, “Still on the trees!” Exchanges similar to this one happen frequently at the market. It is questions like these that show the disconnect shoppers have with their food source. How was this woman supposed to know that fruit trees do not produce till later in the season? She has been shopping at a grocery store where these foods are available year round (Hinson, 2015: 6).

The first question I always asked in my interviews with shoppers was why shop at the farmers’ market? One of the answers I received the most was that the food was “fresh” or “high quality.” Upon further investigation of what “fresh” and “high quality” mean, I found that what people were really describing was how close they felt to the original food source (Hinson, 2015:6). As described by Brooks, Bobos are highly educated; they do their research. Shoppers know that when they see “farm fresh” and “family owned” on packaging in the supermarket, the product will not live up to the quality it is promising. My interlocutors made it clear that they

understand advertisements will not meet consumer standards. Shoppers' need for "fresh" food is really a need for the authentic (Hinson, 2015:6).

The relationship people have with their supermarket produce feels distant. They are not consuming a pure piece of fruit. They are consuming the entire process that went into providing them with that piece of fruit. It passed through many hands and machines before it made it to their dinner table. With the production of new technologies shoppers see the divide between themselves and authentic food growing. The farmers' market provides a space where they can step back in time. They are now in a place where food is "real." When a shopper is handed produce by the "noble savage" farmer, they can see the producer on the other end of the exchange, and feel an immediate and intimate connection with nature. There is no exaggerated advertising with false promises of freshness. The image and feeling they are consuming is raw, natural, and authentic. When they ingest food from the farmers' market, they are incorporating this authenticity into their identity. The "old-fashioned" atmosphere of a farmers' market where your food is handed to you directly by the farmer that grew it is perceived as a much more authentic image than picking a preserved and polished piece of fruit from another country out of a bin at the grocery store. People want the image of a rustic, old-fashioned farmers' market to be incorporated into their self rather than the images found at the supermarket (Hinson, 2015:6). The consumption of the farmers' market inspires feelings of wholeness and authenticity, like what one might experience while out in nature. Observing the natural view, as described by Frykman and Löfgren, is "a form of aesthetic worship" (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987:55). The consumption of the market, its food, and its "savages" is also a form of worship. It is worship of an invented idea that the farmers are living as our ancestors did.

The middle-class search for an unspoiled and natural state, as noted by Frykman and Löfgren emerged out of “a new division of labor” creating “two types of landscape, which rarely overlap. The landscape of industrial production... [and] another new landscape of recreation, contemplation, and romance” (Frykman and Löfgren, 1987:51). The college educated Bobo class is aware of this division. They know that the industrial landscape is associated with the elitist Bourgeois, and the romantic landscape is associated with the “noble savage” farmers. Bobo shoppers are doing their best to not only use the natural landscape as an escape from industrial life, but to reclaim it into their own beings, making themselves more authentic humans. They are looking to close the divide between landscapes by bringing the natural authentic world back into their day to day lives. Because the farmers’ market is seen as being the primitive beginnings to the modern grocery store, and the farmers are its “noble savages,” the farmers’ market represents a place that existed back in time. The farmers’ market is where Bobos’ ancestors used to shop, but not just any ancestors. More specifically the authentic, bohemian, market-going ancestors -- not the Bourgeois ancestors. As a result, Bobos are using the farmers’ market to represent what they believe to be their own cultural heritage.

Clearly, vendors are not actually living in a different time than shoppers. Nor are they living in a less technologically advanced world. Shoppers know this, but they are still disappointed when market vendors do not live up to “noble savage” they have in mind. For example, the biggest produce supplier at the farmers’ market is C&T Produce. They run a 500 acre farm and work six to seven markets a week. One day, a shopper came up to the tent and stated, “C&T has competition,” and then explained that she no longer buys her tomatoes from them. “They’re made to withstand abuse -- I buy ‘em to eat!” She saw the decline in quality of

C&T tomatoes as being related to the size of the business stating, “They’re getting commercial.” She, like many shoppers, choose which vendors to shop from based on how “commercial” they are, preferring those that meet their “noble savage” expectations. The more hands produce passes through, and the more “unnatural” the growing process, the less authentic the food feels. This customer was not too far off with her prediction of C&T being commercial. They use greenhouses in order to produce earlier in the season, and according to Tom, purchase their tomatoes wholesale. There are a few other vendors that Tom speculates purchase produce wholesale. Vendors are not purposefully lying about where they get their produce, but they are not forthright in explaining that they did not grow it themselves.

Vendors know that shoppers want a handmade or naturally grown product. On one occasion, Donald had a set of handmade knives at the market that he was selling. They were from Montana made by an acquaintance of his. A man came up to look at the knives, and asked Donald if he made them himself. Donald said yes and did a stupendous job of explaining to this shopper how he “made” them. He sold most of the knives for what I felt were surprisingly high prices. I asked him later about why he told shoppers that he made them. Donald explained it quite simply: it is what people like to hear. Donald knew he could get more money if shoppers thought he made them himself. At the farmers’ market, people are buying a process, not a product.

Vendors know that the process behind the product is what makes a quality product. If a shopper can have a conversation with the maker of the birdhouse they are examining, or the grower of the squash they are planning on buying for dinner, they are achieving that authentic feeling. Now, when Bobo shoppers take their purchase home, they have a story to tell the people

they share it with. As one shopper told me he said to his family at dinner one night, “Everything on this table is from that market.” Shoppers have a story to go along with the product that furthers the projection of their authentic self. As another shopper put it, when talking about a wooden bird feeder she just purchased, “you are buying a piece of the craftsman.” She said that she as well did wood working and understood how much of oneself goes into each creation. Having a piece of the vendor, craftsman, or farmer in the product and then consuming that product brings the shopper even closer to becoming that “noble savage” themselves. To shoppers, the goal is to build and maintain spiritual wealth rather than monetary.

Process is important to vendors as well, but not just so they can charge more for a product. There is a certain kind of respect that vendors expect customers to have for their products and prices. On multiple occasions, vendors come up to the managers’ tent to complain about shoppers trying to haggle, taking it as a sign of disrespect for the work that went into the production. The market goes to those who understand the amount of work vendors put into their wares have more trust with them. For instance, the group of vendors who I fell in with took until mid-way through the market season to fully trust me with helping at their tents.

Donald was my “gate keeper” in this situation. After a visit to his farm with Tom and Becky, where I showed an interest in his work, he invited me out to help him pick butter peas. It was after spending the day working out in the sun that he started inviting me to work down at his tent at the market. He then started introducing me to the other vendors around him. He always introduced me as being a good worker, and would always reference the day I came out to his farm and helped him pick peas. They started to show me trust and respect that they show each other after I showed them that I had experienced and understood what kind of work they put into

their produce. I only picked one row of peas, and it took me about four hours. Farmers' market prices become much more reasonable when you consider the amount of work goes into producing just a few pounds of produce.

When shoppers can understand and relate to the work that vendors do, there is a greater trust and respect between them. Shoppers trust that the work going into the product makes it worth the price, and vendors trust that shoppers will respect their products and prices. Valuing process over product and the respect that it builds all adds to the authentic food experience. When Bobo shoppers can obtain their food through a more social means, their experience becomes more authentic, and through their consumption, they become more authentic themselves.

Community

The high level of social interaction is one of the most noticeable differences between the grocery store and the farmers' market that vendors and shoppers point out. There is much more happening than purchasing food. Market goers believe themselves to be acting as many more roles than shoppers and vendors. When I asked the director of another farmers' market in Blacksburg, Virginia to describe what the appeal of the farmers' market was, he immediately referenced the community:

Farmers markets are thriving. There is a lot more going on in them than the exchange of money for food. At any given time at the Blacksburg Farmers' Market you will find educational events, live music, and cooking demos. Families, children and pets are everywhere. Customers enjoy sampling fresh produce and talking to farmers. Friends and

acquaintances stop to chat. It has been calculated that people have ten times as many conversations at the farmers' market than they do in the supermarket. Socially as well as economically, the farmers market offers a rich and appealing environment. Someone buying food here may be acting not just as a consumer but also as a neighbor, a citizen, a parent, a cook. We pride ourselves as being not just a place to get the best food around, but a community gathering place.

This market director's understanding of the function of the farmers' market is much more than an alternative food supplier, and many shoppers and vendors would agree with him. Nearly everyone I interviewed used the word "community" to describe what made the farmers' market more appealing than a grocery store. Based on my informants' conversations on community, I am defining it as the resulting web of relationships formed by fictive kinship ties. Not all of these kinship ties are fictive. Many of the businesses at the market are family businesses, and shoppers will make a market day into a family outing. However, my informants seem to emphasize the familial sensations existing outside of their own immediate family. One vendor I interviewed who brings her children to the market with her said, "I have made many friendships that have shaped and formed my life. The market vendors are like a second family to me and the experiences we have gained at the market are many."

Reciprocity, as explained in the economy section, is one of the ways market goes build community. They take a very communitarian approach, believing that these moneyless exchanges add to the greater good of the community. One vendor I asked said, "The value of influencing the community and building community spirit far outweighs the financial reward." They see it as a way of supporting those in the community who need help. For example, Donald

gives away food to a surprising number of people. He explained it to me as taking care of the people that help him. When he weighs out produce, he rounds down for those “who need it” and is more exact for the “rich.” He figures that wealthier shoppers can afford to pay the extra 50 or so cents for their produce. One day he even told me, after dealing with a customer who tried to haggle, “I’d rather they take it for free... I’ll give it to ‘em if they’re hungry.”

The Bobo way of taking care of the community members is by shopping local. They see it as a moral duty to their community and believe that they are helping farmers and local businesses. Local, as defined by the Fredericksburg farmers’ market, is within a seventy-five mile radius of the market. As Tom explained it, “we’re not a producer only market.” This means that farmers can bring produce to sell that was not grown locally so long as they have a sign that lets customers know. However, I have never see one of these signs. This is because vendors know that shoppers define local by who is giving them the product. To shoppers, the grower must be the one giving them the product in order for it to feel local. To keep up the local community atmosphere that shoppers expect, a rule has been set in place by the market: 25% of a vendor’s products can come from outside the local range; however, that 25% must come from other farmers. Local foods sold at the farmers’ market can be found at other local businesses around town. Hyperion Espresso sells granola bars made by Tart Cart, and the wine bar Kybecca sold a cocktail made with Donald’s top selling Redneck Jam.

“Commercial” is another word that gets thrown around at the market, and is used as an antonym for local. For example, as explained in the Authenticity section, a woman was dissatisfied with C&T Produce because they bought their tomatoes wholesale. She complained that they had gone commercial. “Commercial” can apply to any stand that disrupts the

community vibe by not being local. For instance, one day a woman from the Freelance Star asked Tom if she could sell subscriptions at the market. Tom told her he did not want to open the market up to “commercial stuff.” The woman came back twice hoping to get in as a vendor, claiming that the market would be the best spot to sell subscriptions for a community paper. She kept emphasizing the point that it was a *community* paper. In the end, Tom ended up letting her sell subscriptions.

One of the major community building strategies market-goers use is their children. Shoppers as well as vendors describe this community as being good for their children. Vendors set their children up at their booths helping them organize and sell their wares while shoppers’ children help count out dollar bills and tote around their parents purchases. However, I would argue that the role of children at the market is what builds this community rather than already existing and just being good for their development.

On any given market day, children of vendors and shoppers can be found running around Hurkamp Park climbing on trees and playing games. At the market, most parents let their children run free within the park while they do their shopping or selling. There is always a handful of adults in the park who take on the unspoken responsibility of keeping an eye out to see that none of the children get hurt. By taking care of each other’s children, market goers are extending what they feel to be familial ties -- everyone takes care of each other, and each other’s children.

Children will spend a good portion of their time at the market playing in the park, but for some of their visit they are encouraged by their parents to participate in market transactions. Many of the parents at the farmers’ market see this as the perfect opportunity to have their

children practice real world skills. Shoppers will have their children help them count out dollar bills when they buy tokens. Vendors will send their children up to the managers' tent with their tokens to help count them out and get a receipt. In many cases, market-going parents view the farmers' market as being supplemental to their child's regular education. They see it as a way of teaching their children the skills that regular schooling cannot provide. One vendor I spoke with said,

It has been a great learning experience for my kids growing up at the market... The older ones (16 and 13) can confidently set up, sell our wares, make change, educate about our products and pack up entirely by themselves if need be... The market is an important addition to their regular schooling. I value the fact that they are learning how to make change, confidently approach the public, entrepreneurial skills, professionalism and how to separate your work time from social time... We learn from life a lot and I think my kids are capable and smart in a host of different ways.

Many shoppers I have spoken with say similar things as well, emphasizing the importance of boosting their children's confidence and independent problem solving skills. Shoppers encourage their children to ask vendors questions about their produce and farming, and make purchases themselves. For many children, the market is part of their learning curriculum. It teaches them the social skills adults believe are necessary to building the community. However, it is through this process of using the market as a learning space, that the community is created. By making the market into something more than a market, it becomes a community.

Seeing the children believed to result from this community contributes to the romantic and authentic atmosphere. Adults are seeing the community values of the market carried on in

children who get to grow up in it, learning the family business or the value of local food. However, the “Mexicans” or “Hispanics,” as other vendors call them, do not seem to ever be included when shoppers talk about the importance of community. The children of the “Hispanics” will often times be a complaint of other vendors. They are “loud” and “getting into trouble.” Whether any of the “Mexican” families are actually Mexican, I do not know. While these children participate in the market community as much as the white children do, they are not given the same amount of credit for community building as the white children. One of the main differences between these groups of children is their family’s use of the marketplace.

The Bobo shoppers see the market as a community of learning for their children. While the “Hispanics” appear to bring their children mostly to help work. Due to the language barrier it is difficult to tell if they believe the market to be beneficial to their children’s sense of community. Nearly all of the white vendors who bring their children to the market homeschool their children, while the “Hispanics” send their children to public school. For the white children, the market is part of their schooling. For the “Hispanics,” their children come as translators. It is these white families that shoppers see as adding to the romantic community. The homeschooled children speak to the reflective, knowledge-seeking, bohemian aspect of their imagined heritage. They make the market feel like it is about far more than the capitalist motive of making money and getting ahead. The “Mexicans” remind them that vendors are there to make a living, not just create an authentic community atmosphere.

Because the farmers’ market serves a greater purpose than being an alternative food supplier, it is considered a community gathering place. Children are not just being taught the value of a community, they are a vital part to creating this community feel for their parents.

Conclusion

What made Bobo shoppers decide the farmers' market was a better alternative to the grocery store? They will tell you the food is healthier, they want their money to support the local economy, and their presence will help build a healthy community. The deeper meaning behind their reasons is that they believe they have connected to something real. The market is where Bobos can find realness. They see this realness being created by community and authenticity and promoted through their consumer power.

However, it is not realness that attracts them to the market. The market did not inherently contain something more real than any other part of the world. Bobos did not find anything real existing at the market. The farmers' market simply provided the perfect platform to create the realness that they have been looking for. They did not create a false realness. What they feel at the market and what they think of it is not false. They are not lying about what they get out of attending the market. Rather than a false realness, it is an imagined one. They invented it themselves and put the mechanisms in place themselves to make the market into a space that they believe to be in contrast to the modern industrial capitalist world. As Pyle predicted, the market now serves as a functional anachronism.

They created this more genuine feeling world by placing people around themselves who make it more of what they want. SNAP users make the market feel more inclusive -- a key component to building a healthy community. Children are at the market to make adults feel that these ideas and values will be passed on to the next generation, who will take this realness as what the world should really be like. Farmers and vendors make the Bobos feel as though they

are in touch with nature and the original human state. These are the factors that go into creating the “taste of place” identified by Weiss. All the Bobos’ morals, values, and tastes are represented in the environment they built, and can be purchased and consumed through its food.

By consuming the products and ingesting the food that is produced by this ideal Bobo environment, shoppers can take all these values and incorporate them into their own bodies and minds and, as many Bobos would argue, their souls. By consuming the farmers’ market, its people, and its food, shoppers can feed the part of themselves they feel to be saved by a capitalist economy.

Bibliography

- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project. Guide to Farm Field Trips for Farmers and Teachers. Vol. 1. Asheville, NC: Agritourism Office of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2006. ProQuest. Web. 4 Mar. 2015.
- Alkon, Alison Hope., and Julian Agyeman. *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Group, 1982.
- Bohannon, Paul, and George Dalton. *Markets in Africa*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962.
- Borst, Elizabeth. *The Farmers Market.co*. Fredericksburg VA: The Farmers Market.co, 2015. Print.
- Brooks, David. *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. Print.
- Brown, Allison. "Counting Farmers Markets." *Geographical Review* 91, no. 4 (2001): 655.
- Christensen, Angela. "Staying Put: The Endeavors and Wisdoms of Farmers in Twenty-first-century Sustainable Agriculture." *Humanity & Society* 38, no. 3 (2014): 295-313.
- Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." *Daedalus* 101.1, Myth, Symbol, and Culture (1972): 61-81. JSTOR. Web. Apr. 2015
- Dowdy, Justin P., Joseph A. Gregory, Jessica E. Hamby, T. Nolan Jamba, Mary B. LaLone, Becky L. Minter, Richard O. Sarver, Kristin D. Sawicki, David A. Self, Joshua R. Spencer, and Jeri St. Clair. "Learning to Grow: How Farmers Market Vendors Acquire the Knowledge They Need." *The Social and Economic World of Farmers Markets*.

- Radford: Radford University, 2004. 17-26. Print.
- Etzioni, Amitai. "Communitarianism." Ed. Michael T. Gibbons. *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (2015): n. pag. Web.
- Food, Inc.* Dir. Robert Kenner. Magnolia Pictures, 2008. Broadcast.
- "Fredericksburg, VA Farmers Market." Facebook, n.d. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Frykman, Jonas, and Orvar Löfgren. "The Nature Lovers." *Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle-class Life*. Trans. Alan Crozier. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987. N. pag. Print.
- Ganti, Tejaswini. "Neoliberalism." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, June 24, 2014.
- Hinson, Ellery. "*I Really Don't See a Downside to Farmers' Markets*". (April 2015). TS. Collection of Ellery Hinson.
- Izumi, Betty T., D. Wynne Wright, and Michael W. Hamm. "Market Diversification and Social Benefits: Motivations of Farmers Participating in Farm to School Programs." *Journal of Rural Studies* 26.4 (2010): 374-82. ProQuest. Web.
- Jarvis, Rachael. "Walnut Hollow Workshop." Walnut Hollow Workshop. Blogspot, 2011. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Johnston, Josée, and Shyon Baumann. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Kummer, Corby. "Market Correction: The Fragile Balancing Act of Creating a Great Public Food Market." *New Republic* Fall 2015: 6-7. Print.
- Lev, Larry, and Garry Stephenson. "A Learning Approach to Strengthening Farmers' Markets." *Journal of Food and Distribution Research* (2002): n. pag. ProQuest. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.
- Levinson, Bradley. "Education for Cultural Continuity Nd Change." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Web.

- Long, Joshua. "Entering the New Conversational Marketplace: Narratives of Sustainability and the Success of Farm Direct Markets." *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 14.1 (2011): 49-69. Web.
- Longo, Patrizia. "Common Tables and Democratic Solidarity." *TIA Theory in Action* 6, no. 3 (2013): 52-66.
- McCullen, Christie Grace. "Why Are All the White Kids Sitting Together in the Farmers' Market?: Whiteness in the Davis Farmers' Market and Alternative Agrifood Movement." (2008): n. pag. *ProQuest*. Web.
- McKibben, Bill. "Local Economies." About Local Economies. Bill McKibben, n.d. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.
- "Number of U.S. Farmers' Markets Continues to Rise." *USDA ERS - Chart: Number of U.S. Farmers' Markets Continues to Rise*. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 4 Aug. 2014. Web. 28 Jan. 2016.
- Ogbu, John U. "Origins of Human Competence: A Cultural-Ecological Perspective." *Child Development* 52.2 (June 1981): 413-29. Web.
- Pearson, M. N. "Merchants and States." *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350-1750*. Ed. James D. Tracy. Cambridge: Cambridge U, 1997. 41-116. Print.
- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.
- Pyle, Jane. "Farmers' Markets in the United States: Functional Anachronisms." *Geographical Review* 61.2 (1971): 167-97. JSTOR. Web. 15 Feb. 2015
- Sahlins, Marshall. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972. Print.
- Schneider, Stephen. "Good, Clean, Fair: The Rhetoric of the Slow Food Movement." *College*

- English* 70, no. 4, Special Focus: Food (March 01, 2008): 384-402. Accessed October 28, 2015. JSTOR.
- Selmer, Sarah J., James A. Rye, Elizabeth Malone, Danielle Fernandez, and Kathryn Trebino. "What Should We Grow in Our School Garden to Sell at the Farmers' Market? Initiating Statistical Literacy through Science and Mathematics Integration." *Science Activities: Classroom Projects and Curriculum Ideas* 51.1 (2014): 17-32. Web.
- USDA. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)." *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. United States Department of Agriculture, 21 Aug. 2015. Web. 19 Jan. 2016.
- "The Farmers Market Co | Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, King George and Quantico Farmers Markets, Virginia." The Farmers Market Co. So Wise Co., 2015. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Veblen, Thorstein, and Stuart Chase. *The Theory of the Leisure Class; an Economic Study of Institutions*. New York: Modern Library, 1934. Print.
- "Walnut Hollow Workshop." Facebook, 2011. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Washington, Toni Blue. "The Virginia Farmers Market Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Program Request For Participation." Letter to Farmers Market Coordinator. 7 Feb. 2011. MS. Virginia Department of Social Services, n.p.
- Watson, James L., and Melissa L. Caldwell. *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005.
- Weiss, Brad. "Making Pigs Local: Discerning the Sensory Character of Place." *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 3 (2011): 438-61.
- Wittman, Hannah, Mary Beckie, and Chris Hergesheimer. "Linking Local Food Systems and the Social Economy? Future Roles for Farmers' Markets in Alberta and British Columbia." *Rural Sociology* 77, no. 1 (2012): 36-61.